564 servants, nowadays [20] collectively called Amba
794 lavasis. The highest of these were the Chakkyars or reciters of Puranic stories, and the Pushpagans or flower-gatherers for temples.
[611] These two castes had a patrilineal descent-system of the same type as Nambudiris, and are said to have once been Nambudiris who were degraded for ritual offences. They ranked below Nambudiris and above Nayars and the matrilineal temple servant castes. These latter in-
[533] cluded Nambyars, a small caste whose work was to accompany Chakkyar recitations on a metal drum; Psharodis and Variyars, both of whom traditionally sweep the temple, clean temple vessels and make garlands for the idols; Puduvals or drummers on a drum called maddalam; and Marars or regular drummers on another drum called chenda.

The temple-servant castes were small and were chiefly congregated in villages owned by Nambudiri landlords or by large temples. Four main types of temple were owned by the higher castes of Malabar. First came large and wealthy temples owned and managed entirely by groups of Nambudiri landlords and dedicated to one of the orthodox Brahmanical male deities of India, usually Siva or Vishnu. Second came the private temple of each individual Nambudiri family in villages owned by Nambudiris; these were small replicas of the first type, dedicated to the same types of deities. Third came the large
[776] temples, one of which was associated with each royal and chiefly matrilineage. These were usually dedicated to Bhagavadi or Bhadrakali, the Nayar goddess of war, small pox and the soil.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

formal recognition that the bereaved lineage, freed from its death pollution, had been received back into the normal social life of the caste.

Lineage members were also united in worship of their lineage goddess or *dharma devi* ("goddess of moral law"). This goddess, named differently in different lineages, was a species of the common Nayar goddess Bhagavadi. Her idol was housed in a small shrine near the oldest ancestral house or sometimes in the courtyard of the village temple. She was believed capable of inflicting or withholding sickness and all types of misfortune. To ward them off, members propitiated her with offerings of cooked food every year. The astrologer might also advise an emergency propitiation. She had the power to bless women of the lineage with fertility. On this account she was worshipped before a tāli rite and also at the first menstruation ceremonies of a girl. In a somewhat vague sense, moreover, lineage members appear to have felt themselves collectively responsible to the goddess for sins or ritual lapses on the part of one of them. It was believed that if any member failed to observe the religious laws of caste, to perform household duties correctly, or to revere the goddess, she might bring sickness or misfortune upon the lineage as a whole.

In spite of this sense of collective moral responsibility, the evidence is unclear as to whether the lineage as a whole was held legally responsible for any of its member's acts. It is true that the enangar were the legal representatives of the local caste unit in its relations with the lineage. This inter-lineage relationship was hereditary and obligatory. It could not be entered into or permanently broken without the consent of the assembly and the chief of the district. If, moreover, an individual infringed a religious law of the caste, it was the duty of his lineage's enangar to summon a caste assembly to judge and punish the offense. Crimes, which were also sins, against caste law included incest within the lineage; dining or sex relations with prohibited lower-caste persons; failure to perform the marriage rite of a girl before she reached puberty; failure to observe pollution at the birth or death of a lineage member or (on the part of an individual woman) during menstruation; failure to pay dues in kind to the Nayar temple of the neighborhood. On being apprized of an offense, the assembly's first recourse was temporarily to ostracize the offender's household from the caste community. Ostracism meant that the offenders might not enter the temple, bathe in public bathing pools, enter the houses of other Nayars, employ the village servant

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
Central Kerala Nayar

342 tertaining friends, or sleeping when they were not visiting their wives.
[343] A cowshed a few yards from the residential buildings completed the arrangements in a normal retainer homestead. In village headmen's
342 and chiefly households whose women often had Brahman husbands
556 a separate building with its own kitchen was set aside to entertain the men when they visited their wives.

[351] The buildings and outer courtyard were surrounded by a shady garden of coconut, jack, cashew, and mango trees. Chiefs and village
[312] headmen had a private bathing pool with stone steps round it in their own gardens. Retainers more often bathed in the large public bathing
[515] pools attached to the temples and reserved for "clean" castes of the village. Men and women bathed and swam daily on opposite sides of the pool.

351 In the southwest corner of the garden an open space was set aside
613 as the property group's cremation ground, entered only at funerals.
[764] In another corner was a dense shrubbery devoted to the snake gods
[776] of the group. Offerings were made there to small stone images of
[782] cobras, and if real cobras appeared they were regarded as manifesta-
[825] tions of these deities.

A high bamboo fence surrounded the whole establishment. It was entered through a wooden gatehouse within which armed men might
592 sit on guard in time of war.
241 *Economic Activities* The property group obtained almost all of its subsistence from garden and paddy lands held on tenure from the
427 village landlord and cultivated by Tiyyar sub-tenants or by Pulaya
613 serfs. The property group surrendered part of its produce in kind as
433 dues to the landlord. It retained part for maintenance, stored part for repayment to its serfs as daily subsistence, and gave portions twice annually to the village servant households. Tiyyar tenants retained enough for their own needs, but gave the bulk of their produce to
[439] their Nayar masters. Increasingly during the period of European trade the property group also sold spices and coconuts to Muslim middle-
[432] men in exchange for cash or cloth. The cash was used to buy brass and silver vessels, gold ornaments and jewelry, and other luxury goods
[431] from the towns. The property group gave some cloth to its serfs and tenants at festivals once a year.

613 The kāranavan managed all these transactions and controlled the
592 group's estate. He might allocate specific tasks of management to
[465] juniors, but no payment was made on behalf of the group, no crops were sold, and no goods were consumed without his consent. Junior men serving in the king's wars received small daily cash sums on an

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

613 592 of the group, maintaining its accounts in her own hands and counseling the kāranavan on his transactions with outsiders. When the oldest woman was the kāranavan's own or classificatory younger sister or sister's daughter her role was unequivocally subordinate and a formal division of duties was common.

613 592 796 *Rites of the Property Group* The property group jointly invited enangar households to the ceremonies of name giving, first rice feeding, first menstruation, and death. The lineage as a whole held the tāli rite in its oldest house. However, expenses were divided between the property groups and food was cooked separately in their homes.

613 592 764 Similarly, at a death the whole lineage observed pollution and attended the cremation, the gathering of bones on the seventh day, and the purification and feasting on the fifteenth and sixteenth days. But men and women of the deceased's own property group offered cooked rice to the spirit in their courtyard each day during the pollution period. The rites of chief mourner were performed by the junior man considered most closely related to the deceased—her eldest son in the case of a woman, and the man immediately junior to him in the property group in the case of a man.

613 592 776 842 782 787 [753] The propitiation of cobra gods and of dead matrilineal forebears also united the group's members. The cobra deities (*nāgas*) could inflict or avert sickness in general but were especially believed responsible for the fertility or barrenness[1] of taravād women. If a woman failed to conceive, a performance was held at which men and women of a wandering caste called Pulluvar played instruments and sang songs to entice the cobras to appear. A group of women of the taravād, who had purified themselves by sex continence and fasting for several days, then became possessed by the snake gods. They performed a wild dance, bowing and swaying in a circle and sweeping their hair along the ground. In this condition they might speak with the voices of the gods and announce whatever propitiations were necessary to appease them. Sometimes one or more of the women fell into a trance.

776 842 It seems reasonable to suppose that the snake gods were worshipped as phallic symbols. They were definitely not regarded as the spirits of dead matrilineal forebears, yet were capable of withholding fertility or of causing women to conceive. Perhaps, therefore, they symbolized the procreative powers of past genitors of the property group, who

[1] Snake gods inflicted barrenness; the lineage goddess inflicted miscarriages and sickness in childbirth.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wil Kerala A Wil
Central Kerala Nayar

had been so essential to its perpetuation, yet so firmly excluded from its everyday affairs.

Within each Nayar house one room was devoted to the spirits of dead kāranavans. It contained a number of small wooden stools on which spirits were believed to come and sit. The ancestor shrine of the lineage's oldest house contained many stools placed there in turn for the kāranavans of past generations, reaching back to the foundation of the lineage. A newer house would contain only the stools of kāranavans of that house. Offerings of cooked food were made before each stool by the living kāranavan, in the presence of all members, twice a year. The kāranavans' spirits were vindictive rather than protective. They were prone to punish the taravād with sickness or financial loss if any of its members failed in details of ritual performance, in care of the property, or in piety toward matrilineal kin. I have suggested elsewhere (Gough, 1958) that the cult of dead matrilineal forebears served as a focus for aggressive impulses which had their origin in relationships with living matrilineal elders. At the same time it united the living in fear and reverence of the dead and reaffirmed the moral laws of the taravād. It also acted as a sanction against a kāranavan's own exploitation of his juniors, since the maintenance of right relations with junior kinsmen formed part of his pious duty to his forebears.

The Splitting of Property Groups Genealogies and property documents reveal that during the nineteenth century the property groups of retainer Nayars divided at a particular point in their development. This occurred when the property group comprised two or more discrete segments descended from sisters, each segment containing an adult male capable of becoming kāranavan of his branch. For a segment to be "discrete," its founding ancestress, whether herself living or dead, must not have a mother, brothers, or mother's brothers alive. Separation before this point was not possibly because the division of property was stirpital. Individual men, the managers of property, could not separate themselves from their own mothers or sisters. A man could therefore never be a member of a different property group from that of his own mother's mother's brother, mother's brother, or brother. Division could take place only between groups headed by men from different minimal segments (parallel cousins, a man and his classificatory mother's brother, etc.), who were no longer held together by submission to a common mother's brother, grandmother, or great-uncle.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

ners and morals of their caste. She might discipline them with slaps and scolding but was usually indulgent. She taught her children to look to her brother as their authority, and might either report their conduct to him or (more commonly) try to shield them from his correction. A woman's duties to her adult son were to assist in cooking for him, to serve him with food along with other men before she and other women had eaten, and to assist in care of the house. She should offer him counsel and comfort, respecting his wishes but attempting to dissuade him from wrong. Her own moral conduct in the village was a part of her duty to her children. If she infringed the religious laws her shame fell also on them and they were the most likely persons to be visited with supernatural vengeance. A woman should accept the suggestions of her adult son with regard to her conduct. If he became her kāranavan she theoretically owed him obedience in law.

A child should respect his mother's teaching, although strict obedience to her was not demanded before the age of five or six. Throughout her life he should revere her, remembering that he owed to her his membership of his taravād and all the birth-status rights of his caste. For her sake he should maintain right relations with his matrilineal kinsfolk, submitting to his male elders and protecting his sisters and their children. A man should protect his mother from slander or physical harm. When he entered the village after an absence he must go first to greet her. While he stayed there he should live in his natal house and make himself available to his mother's requests. He should not incur her jealousy by visiting a wife for long periods in the daytime, or by eating frequently in the house of a wife or of friends. In all things he should place his mother's comfort and the interests of the taravād above his private concerns. In her old age he must offer comfort and companionship to his mother and after death must perform funeral rites and make annual offerings on behalf of her soul. Neglect of the mother by an adult son was the height of impiety. The lineage goddess was believed to inflict sickness on an impious son.

The etiquette of behavior between mother and adult son required mutual respect and a certain restraint on both sides. Each stood when the other entered the room, although they might later sit together and converse informally. They discussed questions of property and the affairs of the taravād in serious confidence, but undignified gossip and talk touching on sexual matters were prohibited between them.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AW11 Kerala AW11
Central Kerala Nayar

own daughters and grandchildren, but sisters "stood in" for one another in caring for their children and contributed their work in a manner conducive to the general welfare.

Between sisters, especially own sisters, there was deep personal affection as well as loyalty to the sibling group and to the taravād. Sisters were also rivals, often squabbling over jewelry, clothing, and favors. Both rivalry and affection were most intense between sisters close in age.

Most women died in their ancestral homes among their siblings and children. Only a woman whose forebears and brothers were all dead might move away from her sisters into a separate property group headed by her son as kāranavan. Even so, sisters often lived to experience covert disputes between their children, who looked forward to the day when they would separate into new branch taravāds. In the last resort sisters would support their own children in quarrels, although they tried not to become involved in such disputes but to preserve their mutual amity.

MARRIAGE

The taravād was obviously of very great strength as an economic and legal corporation. Correspondingly, marriage was the slenderest of ties.

Every ten or twelve years, the immature girls of one generation within a lineage were ritually married on the same day by men drawn from their enangar lineages. Before the ceremony the girls were secluded for three days and caused to observe ritual prohibitions as if they had menstruated. (The actual rite of tying the tāli or gold ornament around the bride's neck is the central rite of "normal" marriage among most of the patrilineal castes of South India.) After the tāli rite, each couple was secluded for three days in a room of the ancestral house. Their seclusion clearly marked a ceremonial if not an actual defloration, and travelers' accounts of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries indicate that the brides were actually deflowered at this time (Stanley, 1865: 24; Kerr, 1811: chap. 6; Hamilton, ed. Penzer, 1930, I: 174). During the seclusion period, rites were performed to the goddess Bhagavadi to enhance the girls' fertility. On the fourth morning each couple took a purifying bath and ate a meal together. In Calicut and Walluvanad, although apparently not in Cochin, each bridegroom then tore in two the lower cloth worn by the girl in the period of seclusion. He kept one half and handed the other to the girl. Their personal obligations ended, the bridegrooms left the household.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
Central Kerala Nayar

A husband normally visited his wife after eating supper in his natal home, and left before breakfast. Even today in many orthodox Nayar homes men eat regularly in their taravāds and accept food in their wives' homes only on special invitation from their wives' kāranavans. Traditionally a husband placed his weapons outside his wife's door as a sign to other men that he was within. My informants in a Cochin village reported that, within living memory in the late nineteenth century, if two husbands called on the same night the one who came last might sleep outside on the veranda. Usually a woman's regular husbands knew each other and informally agreed upon their turns.

The relationship with the visiting husband was called *sambandham* (Sanskrit, "joining together"). At the start of a girl's first sambandham her husband came to her house privately at night, sometimes with a few friends of his own age. In the presence of the girl's kin he presented her with a white cloth of the kind worn as a skirt. The occasion was not marked by feasting. Later husbands might or might not present the cloth. A transient visitor is said to have left a gold coin beneath the woman's pillow, and a regular husband might do the same on the first night of his union.

While his relationship lasted, a regular husband was expected to make gifts to his wife at the three main festivals of the year. Vishu, in April, was the Malayalam New Year; Onam, in September, was a harvest festival; Tiruvadira, in December, was a women's festival to Kama Devan, the god of passion. The gifts were of bathing oil, bananas, wafer biscuits, and betel leaves and areca nuts for chewing. In some areas a husband also gave a loin cloth of superior quality at Onam. The gifts were prepared by women of the husband's taravād, and he should present them in person to each of his wives on the festival day. If a husband failed to make these gifts it was a tacit sign that he had ended the relationship. It should be noted that the gifts, trivial in value, were gifts of courtship and were in no sense maintenance. Bathing oil is a feminine toilet requisite; wafer biscuits are delicacies served at feasts; and the giving of chewing materials between a man and a woman is everywhere in South India associated with courtship or with the first night of marriage. A husband had no obligation at all to maintain his wife, for she received her food, shelter, and regular clothing from her taravād.

The only other obligations of a husband came at the birth of a child. When a woman became pregnant it was necessary for one or more men of appropriate caste to acknowledge possible biological

the father's village, if this was different from the mother's. In this way, matrilineal kin might become widely scattered between many villages, while remembering the village from which their matrilineal forebears sprang.

THE SUB-CLAN

This group corresponded to the clan in Central Kerala. It was a segment of the clan whose members seem to have been located within one chiefdom. The structure and functions of this group were identical with those of the clan in Central Kerala, the members observing death and birth pollutions as well as exogamy.

THE LINEAGE

As in Central Kerala, the lineage was that portion of a clan located in one neighborhood (tara). Traditionally there seem to have been about six to ten lineages in one neighborhood, as in Central Kerala. A lineage was internally segmented and segmentation was relevant to the reversion of property. Exogamy, the observance of pollution, and the extension of kinship terms inhered in the lineage. Perhaps because village headship was weaker than in Calicut and each commoner lineage stronger as an organized group of kinsfolk, rites connected with the lineage were more prominent in the North than in the Center (Gough, 1958). There were few or no neighborhood temples of Bhagavadi. Instead, each lineage held a grand annual festival to its own patron Bhagavadi and to minor male deities, in which the lower castes took part. We have mentioned blood feuds between lineages, which indicate that a lineage was, in popular thought, if not in law, considered responsible for its members' physical protection.

Little is known today of the enangar relationship in North Kerala. It did exist, and enangar are said to have attended life-crisis rites and to have had some function in neighborhood caste trials of offenders against religious law. However, enangar did not tie the tāli of immature girls and did not participate in any form of group marriage. Among Nambiars and in most of the aristocratic Nayar lineages a girl's tāli was tied before puberty by some local Nambudiri Brahman. He was often an old man, and he appears to have had no right of cohabitation. The woman and her children did not observe pollution at his death. As far as I can judge the tāli rite in this area was merely an initiation rite which, at least in the nineteenth century, removed the ritual danger of cohabiting with a virgin (Gough, 1955). It also instituted the etiquette associated with incest prohibitions between the girl and her matrilineal kinsmen.

become drunk with toddy and arrack. In this condition, one or more young men might undergo possession by one of the ghosts. He performed a frenzied dance and called out to the assembled members with the voice of the ghost, declaring its will and thanking or threatening the *taravād* on its behalf. I heard of only one *taravād* where this custom persisted. Shamanistic possession by the goddess Bhagavatī or by the god Aiyappan is, however, still prevalent among rural Nāyars, and such religious possession is still more common among the lower castes.

In some *taravāds*, propitiation of lineage ghosts accompanies that of various deities associated with the *taravād*. Chief of these is the lineage's patron goddess (*dharma devī*). The goddess, though known by different names in different *taravāds*, is always thought of as a species of the generic goddess Bhagavadi or Bhādrakāli, the chief deity of the Nāyars. Each group of Nāyar *taravāds* in a village usually possesses in common a temple dedicated to Bhādrakāli, but each *taravād* has, in addition, its own goddess. Cults of the village goddess are more important in Cochin, and of the *taravād* goddess, in Kottayam. The village goddess is believed capable of withholding or inflicting on the population wholesale misfortunes of a kind which strike all men alike—smallpox, cholera, flood, drought, cyclone, cattle epidemic, or defeat in an intervillage feud. Such inflictions result from failure to propitiate the goddess or failure to uphold the moral laws of caste. The *taravād* goddess concerns herself with its members' private morality and inflicts such individual misfortunes as fever, barrenness in women or cattle, or grave financial loss.

In aristocratic *taravāds*, the goddess and the lineage ghosts may nowadays be housed together in an ancient gynasium (*kalari*) near the ancestral house—a building formerly devoted to the military training of the *taravād's* youth. The ghosts may then be propitiated with cooked food on the same day on which a cock is sacrificed to the patron goddess. In such rites, propitiation of both spirits and goddess are associated with the *taravād's* former martial glory. In the rites there usually figure one or more ancestral swords which the male forebears used during their lives. These swords are the property of the goddess and are propitiated by the *kāranvan* as representatives of the deity.

Lineage ghosts have some concern with the *taravād's* internal morality. If its members fail in hospitality to guests, squander their income, or neglect their property, the ghosts may inflict misfortunes on one or more members of the group. However, failure to propitiate the ghosts correctly is the offence most likely to provoke retribution. Conversely, if offerings are made correctly to the ghosts, they will help to preserve the *taravād* from misfortune.

The ghosts vary in their severity and in the wrongs which they punish. A *kāranavan* who amassed much property is most likely to resent extravagance on the part of his successors. Forebears who died prematurely are more punitive than those who died peacefully in old age. All ghosts, however, are somewhat capricious: a small offense may provoke stern retribution, and misdemeanors on the part of one adult may result in the sickness of another or of a child of the property group. In particular, a forebear who was injured or insulted by his juniors during life or after his death may wreak vengeance on the *taravād* even down to the seventh or eighth generation. One instance from a village headman's lineage in Kottayam will illustrate such retribution. In 1798, the property group was dying out for lack of women, and the *kāranavan* adopted a woman and her children from a related segment of his lineage. After the

4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

kāranavan's death, his adopted successor was too young to manage the property. This passed temporarily into the management of a man from still another branch of the same lineage. When the true claimant came of age he disputed his guardian's management. After a bitter lawsuit the guardian was deposed in a British court. He continued to live on the *taravād*'s land and to harass his young successor. When the guardian died, the young *kāranavan* in his anger failed to arrange for the cremation rites until several days had passed and the corpse had decomposed. The ghost of this proxy *kāranavan* has harrassed his successors ever since, causing many of them to die of diabetes. The present members regard this condition as a decomposition of the body during life. The ghost's anger is so great that propitiations do not wholly avert its vengeance, although special offerings temporarily delay the progress of the disease.

The misfortunes inflicted by lineage ghosts include many forms of sickness, mental disorder, female barrenness and miscarriages, all of which are attributed to actual bodily possession by a ghost. Financial loss, crop failure and the deaths of babies or cows may also result from the ghosts' displeasure. I could find no very clear distinction between the misfortunes inflicted by lineage ghosts and those brought about by the patron goddess, by malevolent alien ghosts, or by the witchcraft or sorcery of enemies. Indeed it is obvious that the Nāyars themselves do not clearly restrict particular misfortunes to particular agents. For on the occasion of a misfortune, the *kāranavan* must often consult the village astrologer (Kanisan) who makes calculations to discover the responsible agent. He then instructs the *kāranavan* how to carry out its propitiation or to accomplish its control.

However, my information suggests that some misfortunes may be more likely to be attributed to some agents than to others. Miscarriages, for example, seem to be often attributed to ancestresses, to female alien ghosts, or to the patron goddess. Barrenness is often attributed to the snake gods of the *taravād*, who are believed to guard the fertility of its women. These misfortunes seem to be less often attributed to male ghosts, although some instances are known. Perhaps most important, however, circumstances immediately preceding the misfortune may help to determine the agent. If a forebear has died recently, or if a *taravād* has failed to propitiate its lineage ghosts or patron goddess, the *kāranavan* may not even trouble to consult the astrologer, or the astrologer may merely corroborate his suspicions. Similarly, if a man has an enemy with whom he has recently quarreled and then himself falls ill with fever, he is like to assume that the enemy has engaged the services of a witch or sorcerer against him. In small villages whose population is stable, moreover, the astrologer makes it his business to know the affairs of his clients and thus to diagnose appropriate causes for their misfortunes.

Sociological analysis. A satisfactory analysis of the functions of lineage ghosts must take into account those of other supernatural agents and of secular authorities. Among the Nāyars, supernatural agents have played only a minor role in punishing offences against men, as distinct from those against themselves. This is undoubtedly because human authorities of various kinds had strong judicial functions, deriving from their incorporation in a kingdom. In the last analysis their authority was backed by the military power of the king or chief. Among Nāyars, civil disputes were tried by village headman or district chief. Certain major crimes against the kingdom's religious laws were tried in the Raja's court. They included the killing of a cow or a Brahman or fornication with lower caste persons. The killing or assault of a Nāyar

4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

159 593 school education and disbelieved in much traditional Nāyar ritual. Yet he once arranged for the performance of a sacrifice to a minor malevolent deity, Kuttichāttan, because his mother thought that this demon had killed their calf. On this occasion he complained that he found her control irksome, and wished he had younger brothers who would care for her and allow him to travel more. "I love *and* fear her," he said, "Sometimes I am angry with her." "But you don't say anything?" "Ah, no, nothing!" 593 769 Far more than in most of the patrilineal castes of South India, therefore, a man's mother remains the supreme, if somewhat resented, moral authority. There is no wonder that after death a woman should be believed capable of punishing her children and grandchildren if they displease her.

769 613 Even so, ancestresses play only a minor part in the cult of forebears, subordinate, as in life, to the spirits of *kāranavans*. For the cult of lineage ghosts too closely resembles everyday adult relationships in the *taravād* for women to be accorded a 776 paramount place within it. In religion, the supreme moral authority of the mother 593 finds its expression rather in the cult of the goddess Bhagavadi. Bhagavadi is lifted above the sphere of kinship relationships, yet as patron of the *taravād* and the village she is stated to be the supernatural counterpart of the mother. Her attributes are more awesome and archaic than are those of ancestresses, and it seems probable that in her are portrayed very early infantile fantasies of the mother, corresponding to those of the period when she was the only significant object in the child's world. She inspires devotion and tenderness but, in her aspect as Bhādrakāli, she is also a horrendous demon, having snakes for hair, talons for fingernails, fangs for teeth, brandishing weapons in her arms, and with her mouth dripping blood. Her oral aggression is emphasized, for she is a devourer of male demons who dare to oppose her power. Bhagavadi is the great deity of both men and women among Nāyars, but she is more concerned with men than with women. She is the goddess of war, she possesses men more frequently than women, and it is men who devote themselves intensively to 769 her cult. Ancestresses, on the other hand, seem to be somewhat more likely to attack 593 women than men. The different relationships of men and of women to their mothers may be relevant in this connection. For a woman, the relationship with the mother is less awesome, less inspiring, more intimate and realistic but also more irksome and [613] rivalrous than for a man. A woman replaces her mother in the *taravād*, and as she grows up, rivalry, including sexual rivalry, is often apparent between them. Women retain the right to administer corporal punishment to their daughters until adolescence or marriage, whereas men earlier pass under the discipline of their mothers' brothers and appear to retain a more childlike image of the mother. Nuances in the cult of the ancestors and the great deities appear to reflect this differential relationship of men and women to the senior generation.

184 593 769 613 In Kottayam, with avunculocal residence, fathers traditionally had a protective and intimate relationship with their children. It might be expected that the father's ghost would figure in some way in the cult of ghosts. This is not the case. The cults are practically identical in Kottayam and Cochin, and although a woman and her immature children in Kottayam lived in the house of the woman's husband, the husband's lineage ghosts were not believed capable of affecting their welfare. This is apparently because, both in Kottayam and Cochin, the ancestor cult mirrors the legal structure and collective responsibility of the *taravād*, which are identical in the two areas. The father's ghost has no place among the lineage ghosts because,

4: Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

the pyre toward the close of the cremation, and the disposal of the bones and ashes in a river far from the ancestral house. But among my Brahman informants in Tanjore these rites were carried out without explanation, and hostility to the dead seemed to find no conscious expression. Nāyars performed the same rites in full consciousness of fear and hostility to the ghost. Even at the end of the *dīkṣā* period when the chief mourner has deposited the ashes in a river, Nāyars believe that Bhairava and Kāla, messengers of the god of death, dog the mourner's footsteps back to his ancestral house. He is out of danger from them only after performing final offerings in the house which gather the ghost to its forebears and thus appease its wrath. Nāyars, like Brahmans, express grief at a death and engage in ceremonial weeping, although neither caste weeps with the loud vehemence characteristic of the lower polluting castes. But whereas Brahmans give full expression to grief and guilt, suppressing the hostile aspect of their ambivalence, Nāyars perform the same rites in consciousness both of grief and of hostile fear of the dead.

The traditional Nāyar rites and beliefs illustrate the common phenomenon of elements of symbolic culture being diffused from one group to another and endowed with a new emotional content and meaning in accordance with the needs of the receiving group. The Nāyars presumably adopted Brahmanical death rites centuries ago because of the prestige associated with certain distinctive customs of the highest group in the caste society. The extensive contact with Brahmans afforded to them by hypergamous marital unions gave them an unusual exposure to Sanskrit culture. But through centuries of exposure to Brahmanical custom the Nāyars retained such characteristically "low caste" features as animal sacrifice to punitive deities, religious possession, and propitiation of punitive lineage ghosts. I would argue that the Nāyars and lower castes retained these customs because the emotional dispositions engendered by their occupations and social relations—in particular, their ways of handling aggression and relationships to authorities—are different from those of Brahmans. Presumably also the Nāyars adapted the Sanskritic death rites to their own role structure and belief system, because these grew out of and served to uphold norms of relationships within the *taravād*.

The Cults of Alien Ghosts

In addition to lineage ghosts, Nāyars believe that the spirits of persons of any caste who died prematurely from epidemic, accident, murder, or suicide can bring misfortune to the living. Such ghosts, which I call alien ghosts, haunt the neighborhood where they died and are particularly malevolent. The misfortunes they inflict include many kinds of sickness; madness, female barrenness, cattle deaths, house fires, or poltergeist activities. Like lineage ghosts, most alien ghosts are called *pretams*. In Cochin, the Sanskrit word *piśāca* is sometimes used to distinguish them from lineage ghosts. In Kottayam, there is an elaborate cult of certain particularly important ghosts, which are called *teyyams* (a corruption of the Sanskrit word *deva* 'god').

In Cochin, one or more alien ghosts is sometimes attached to a Nāyar *taravād*, whose members are obliged to arrange for its regular propitiation. The ghost may be that of a person who is known to have died violently, within living memory, on the *taravād's* land. Alternatively, when a misfortune occurs in a household, the astrologer may newly discover that the ghost of some such person, long dead, is haunting the *taravād's* land. He may order a shrine to be built and propitiations to be made. Shrines

4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

No clear distinction is made between alien ghosts and minor malevolent deities, or demons, which are also sometimes called *pretams* in Cochin. Some demons are found throughout Malabar. Chief of these is Kuttichāttan, a spirit capable of all kinds of poltergeist activities. Sometimes, on the advice of an astrologer, a *taravād* privately sets up a shrine to Kuttichāttan and arranges for his annual propitiation by a low caste person in the same manner as an alien ghost. Often, indeed, local myths of particular Kuttichāttans suggest that they have been derived from alien ghosts, whose legends became fancifully embroidered with miraculous elements. The story of one Kuttichāttan, in this case enshrined in a Nambūdiri Brahman garden and propitiated by a washerman, will illustrate this process. The god was said to have been born from a sacrificial fire during ancestral ceremonies in a Brahman house. The Brahman house-owner brought him up, and when he was adult sent him to graze cattle as a serf. One day the Brahman's red-horned bull was missing, and the serf admitted that he had killed and eaten it. The Brahman tied him to the rafters of the cowshed and had him beaten to the point of death. Afterwards, the serf turned into a Kuttichāttan and disappeared, but hovered above the Nambūdiri household bringing misfortune until a shrine was set up for him. Educated Nāyar informants surmised that the spirit had originally been that of an executed serf, later glorified by his propitiants as Kuttichāttan. Similarly, Kadangōtt Makkam, whose story was related above, is spoken of as a form of Bhagavadi in some *taravāds* where she is propitiated.

I have so far mentioned the kinds of alien ghosts which may be attached to individual *taravāds* in Cochin. In fact, however, cults of spirits and deities of the village are grander and more numerous in Cochin than are those of the *taravād*. This parallels the fact that the Cochin village was traditionally highly centralized as a unit of local government. In this area, the temple of the village goddess Bhagavadi is managed either by a Nāyar village headman's lineage or collectively by a village community of commoner Nāyars. Only the Nāyars and castes above them might traditionally enter the temple, but all castes owed allegiance to the deity and took part in her annual festival. The lowest castes of former serfs, and some other polluting castes such as washermen, took part in the festival through the medium of one or more minor malevolent deities or particularly important local ghosts which occupied small shrines at a distance from the main temple. Such spirits were thought of as servants of the goddess, and at her will could "sow the seeds" of smallpox or other misfortunes in the village. To avert such misfortune not only must the Nāyars and other high castes propitiate the goddess herself, but the lower castes must also assemble, bringing imitation bullocks and horses—the vehicles of the deity's demon servants—and make offerings to these demons. Selected persons from these lower castes became possessed by the village ghosts or demons and, in masked dances, made oracular pronouncements both to their own and the higher castes. During the festival, and for several weeks before it, Nāyar households must also entertain these shamans privately in the courtyards of their houses and make gifts of grain to them which warded off the demons' wrath.

In Kottayam, the village was traditionally less centralized. Each Nāyar *taravād* was an independent landowning body owing only tenuous allegiance to a chief. Cults of deities and ghosts associated with particular *taravāds* are therefore more prominent than are those of village temples, and it is in the former rather than the latter that ritual cooperation between high and low castes is most prominent. Whereas a Cochin

taravād may enshrine only one or two alien ghosts particularly associated with it, leaving the majority of local ghosts to be propitiated at the central village temple. In a wealthy Nāyar *taravād* in Kottayam builds shrines in its garden for six or eight alien ghosts and finances elaborate propitiations on their behalf. Such spirits are in Kottayam called *teyyams*. As in Cochin, the spirits are often the ghosts of Nāyar or low caste persons who died violent deaths—for example, girls who died violently before marriage, women excommunicated or executed for sexual offences, persons killed by lightning, servants executed by their masters, or warriors who died in battle. Usually, miraculous elements are interwoven into their legends. Sometimes, they become merged with common minor deities such as Vettakkorumagan, Kandhākaranan, or some species of Bhagavadi. In a few cases, they have become associated with some episode from the puranic myths and their human origin is lost sight of. As in the village temple rites of Cochin, these ghosts in Kottayam are propitiated, on behalf of the Nāyar *taravād*, by selected persons from the lower castes. These are chiefly Vannans (washermen) and Malayans (exorcists).[22] Annually, the propitiants assemble in the Nāyar courtyard and recite the myths of origin of their spirits. Later, they make and receive blood sacrifices to the spirits, and finally, while possessed by them, perform spectacular masked dances and declare the spirits' satisfaction to an assembled company of many castes. These festivals take place throughout the whole of several nights in the month of January to February and draw vast crowds from the surrounding neighborhood.[23]

I have so far dealt with modes of propitiation of, and possession by, alien ghosts. In addition, both in Cochin and Kottyam, Nāyars believe that certain persons can, through appropriate rites and spells, gain private control over alien ghosts and minor deities and engage in witchcraft or sorcery through their power. In what I call witchcraft,[24] the individual uses the power of his patron spirit in order to take the form of a bull, dog, jackal, or other animal. In this form he touches his foe in the night, causing him to fall ill with fever, to become insane, or even to die. Witches always belong to one of the lowest castes of Parayans, Pulayans, Pānans or (in Kottayam) Malayans. They usually attack persons of Nāyar or other high caste whom they themselves hate. Occasionally, however, a normal person of any caste, even a Nāyar, may hire a witch to attack a personal enemy.

A sorcerer performs rites and recites spells to an alien ghost or minor deity over which he has control and causes it to pass magically into the body of an enemy, thus bringing about fever, miscarriages in women, insanity or death. Sorcerers can also bring about the deaths of cattle. Nāyars attribute sorcery chiefly to lower caste persons. For whereas the Nāyars predominantly worship Bhagavadi and certain Sanskrit deities, the castes below Nāyars specialize in the propitiation of evil ghosts and minor deities, and it is solely with these lower supernatural beings that witchcraft and sorcery are associated. Washermen, astrologers and umbrellamakers, who specialize in exorcising ghosts from the bodies of patients, are particularly suspected by Nāyars of themselves engaging in sorcery. Nāyars do, however, occasionally suspect Nāyars of other lineages, particularly affines with whom they have quarreled, of practicing sorcery or of hiring low caste witches or sorcerers to attack them.

Witchcraft does not usually require the diagnosis of an astrologer. A Nāyar of nervous disposition simply suspects that a low caste man has bewitched him if he falls ill after encountering an animal in the night. Sorcery is usually diagnosed by an

4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

754 769 564 forms of direct aggression which would be condemned by law. I am uncertain whether low caste people actually practice sorcery, but it seems very probable that they do. If they do, it is also very probable that they regard their actions as forms of retaliation which are morally justifiable, although outside the framework of the law. By contrast, alien ghosts institutionally attached to the *taravād* and the village have the support of all right-minded persons and are more comparable to institutionalized secular authorities. For they are concerned with the overall maintenance of interdependent and harmonious relations between castes of the community, and their cults are a public, collective acknowledgement of the need for these relationships.

564 769 A complete analysis of alien ghost cults would, of course, require full discussion of their role in the lives of the lower castes themselves. I lack space here for such a discussion but will make one or two relevant points. In each of these lower castes there were cults of familial ghosts. These, though less elaborate than the Nāyar cult of lineage ghosts, fulfilled similar intrafamilial functions. Some lower caste households [778] also erected one or more unhewn stones in their gardens which were believed to enshrine male or female alien ghosts or minor deities. These spirits seem to have fulfilled, for the household itself, similar functions to those of the *dharma devī* of a Nāyar *taravād*. They were propitiated by the low caste householder. Nāyars believed that a low caste man could also control such a household spirit, or some personal spirit over which he had gained individual sway, to bring harm on an enemy through sorcery. Lower caste persons certainly believed that some members of their castes possessed these powers, and it seems probable that some persons did try to employ them. Household or personal spirits could also be used by powerful owners to exorcise other harmful spirits from the bodies of high or low caste people suffering from attacks by sorcery.

564 152 754 The Nāyar's relationship to these lower castes was therefore one of secular authority combined with some ability to oppress them in the economic and political spheres. In addition, the Nāyar projected his aggression against them in the belief that they might harm him through witchcraft or sorcery. The lower caste man's relationship to the Nāyar was one of submission. He could not express direct aggression toward the Nāyar. He probably did, however, express aggression toward a Nāyar enemy covertly through sorcery. It is possible that a few low caste persons in addition believed themselves capable, through witchcraft, of assuming the form of an animal and bringing harm to an enemy of higher caste. It must also be mentioned that low caste persons believed others of their caste to be capable of sorcery against themselves. Witchcraft, however, seems to have been confined to relationships between low and high castes.

769 564 782 613 776 152 The lower castes of the village also owed allegiance to the Nāyar goddess Bhagavadi, who was enshrined in Cochin in the village temple, and in Kottayam in small temples attached to particular *taravāds*. The lower castes could, however, approach Bhagavad, only through the propitiation of alien ghosts attached to the *taravād* or the temple. In the context of these propitiations, the lower caste officiant's relationship to his Nāyar hosts was a complex combination of aggression, authority, cooperation, and submission. In the *teyyam* festival of a Nāyar *taravād* in Kottayam, for example, lower caste officiants must first humbly gain permission from the living Nāyar *kāranavan* the Nāyar lineage ghosts and the *taravād* goddess before starting their own propitiations. In the offerings to the *teyyams* which follow, the officiant's attitude to these minor deities is ostensibly one of humility, although the actual performance of the blood sacrifices permits considerable expenditure of aggression. Later, when the officiant

5:Mehra E-5 (no date) 1956 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

hoods are placed in the shrine, and no insect or rat or other animal is killed in the consecrated spot. Even broken bits of snake images are worshipped and they are set up in a row. No image or snake-stone is permitted to fall down, as that is considered to be inauspicious. On the inner surface of the hood of the snake is carved a seated female figure.

These sacred snakes are supposed to be different from the ordinary serpents. They are given the status of benign family deities and are presumed to possess strange powers and the attribute of gods. They are revered and they deign to live only under ceremonially pure conditions and surroundings, accepting only vegetarian offerings and abhorring animal sacrifice. In contrast mention may be made of the Thlen of the Khasis which demands human blood as offering. In the event however of their abode being polluted, e. g., by a menstruating woman, the serpents are angered, and unless propitiated may cause disease or harm to the offender. The sacred serpent called *sarpam* is supposed to be small, about 6 to 18 inches in length and is golden in colour. It is highly poisonous but ordinarily does not do any harm. If properly propitiated it guards the family and brings good luck and prosperity; but if neglected, insulted, or otherwise uncared for, it causes skin disease, leprosy or loss of sight. Such a punishment is visited on the offender or on his near relatives. As a consequence certain taboos are attached to the shrines and no menstruating or pregnant woman may come within six yards of the shrine, nor should anyone enter it without taking a bath.

The actual worship or *puja* is conducted either once or twice a year. The priest cooks rice in milk and adds pieces of ripe plantain to it, with a few flowering heads of the sacred *tulsi* plant dropped in towards the end. The offering is cooked on a special oven near the *sarpa kavu* in a bell-metal vessel. Thereafter, the priest pours some water over the snake idols to ceremonially bathe them and places a bunch of areca-nut palm in efflorescence on the head of the image in a diagonal fashion. The idol is then anointed with turmeric powder and basil leaves and flower petals are

5:Mehra E-5 (no date) 1956 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

please the serpent god and to flatter him so that he may bear the welfare of the host in mind, and guard the family against disease, misfortune and harm accruing from human or supernatural agencies.

There are three important ceremonies in connection with serpent worship called *sarpa yaga*, *sarpa tulal* and *sarpa preeti*. They are conducted either at home or in the temple, usually on Sundays, since it is held that the serpents are most powerful and lenient on that day and are in a benign mood for granting favours.

Sarpa preeti is conducted in the house whenever misfortune occurs. The astrologer is consulted who decrees that a curse is upon the house and the serpents are angry. Thereupon elaborate worship is conducted with much ritual, and propitiation of the angered deities is effected and normalcy returns.

Sarpa tulal is a form of divine cure of the afflicted. The unfortunate victims of leprosy, mental or other diseases gather to worship the serpent gods praying for a cure. The priest conducts the worship and the afflicted go into a trance-like state and dance in religious fervour. Thereafter the priest throws consecrated turmeric powder on their heads and faces. The devotee feels blessed and cures are believed to occur.

Sarpa yaga is an annual festival in which many families jointly contribute to hold the ceremony. It is held usually for the collective prosperity of the village and lasts for two or three days. The afflicted and diseased persons dance in a trance for a long time and are given coco-nut water by the priest. At the end of the *puja* the priest sprinkles turmeric powder over the heads of the devotees and pours out holy water thrice in the palm of their hands.

One of the special attributes of snakes is their power over disease. The snake deities are specifically importuned for the prevention of skin diseases, stomach disorders, mental disturbances and for sterility. Leucoderma and leprosy are specially regarded as due to the curse of snakes who might have been angered by some unwitting disrespect shown towards them, or by accidental misdemeanour on the part of the inadvertant devotee. Of particular impor-

5·Mehra E-5 (no date) 1956 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

of particular importance is the ritual conducted in the case of barren women who seek divine intercession of the serpent gods. The afflicted couple come on a Sunday morning to the snake temple after a purificatory bath and after putting on new garments. They request the priest to conduct a propitiatory *puja* and offer flour to the deity. Thereafter, a bronze plate on which the name of the person is carved is placed inverted at a spot. After a year when they have been blessed with a child, they repair to the temple once more to offer thanks for the boon granted. The child is helped to lift the bronze plate and under it a small serpent is observed signifying that all is well. In the event of there being no snake underneath, it is taken as a bad omen predicting the death of the child. If even after ten years no child is born to the couple, the unretrieved bronze plate is discarded, on the presumption that the deity has not seen fit to grant the wishes of the devotees.

There is also a class of pious people who have through their devotion to, and worship of, the snake deity, acquired the art of curing victims of snake-bite. They are called *sarpa vaidyas* and cases of snake-bite are brought to them for treatment. The man chants certain magical formulae and tears a betel leaf in front of a pot of milk. The serpent is supposed to come out of hiding and to withdraw the venom, thus effecting a gradual cure.

But modern trends are contrariwise, and a gradual decline is discernible in the ritual of snake worship in a large majority of households which have snake shrines. Less emphasis is paid to the traditional worship of the serpent, and what little propitiation is done is more or less symbolic. Makeshift arrangements are often made, and worship by proxy is offered by the priest, in the absence of the family members, who merely pay a fixed sum to the priest for his labours, and thereby absolve themselves of the guilt of neglecting the snake gods.

Apart from simplification of the ritual of snake worship, yet another symptom of the decay of the cult appears to be the reduced importance that is given to the upkeep of the existing snake shrines. Many erstwhile sacred shrines are in a dilapidated condition. Perhaps in future, snake worship itself might become a thing of the past.

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2 Rickson & Maclagan : *Glossary of Tribes and Castes of Punjab & N. W. F. P.*, 149.

3 Gurdon : *The Khasis*, 96-102.

4 Dubois & Beauchamps : *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, 641.

5 Hodson : *The Meitheis*, 110.

302
[777] Shaving cannot be done on a Tuesday or a Saturday, or on the day of an eclipse of sun or moon; nor on the full moon day, the new moon day, nor on the 11th day of the moon—the Êkadasi. This applies to most Nâyars, but not to all.

*142 *Colour of the skin.*—The skin of the darkest individual
*564 corresponded to Broca's colour type No. 43. There was but one of this colour.

Three were of No. 28.
Seventeen were of No. 29 and lighter.
Three were of No. 37 and lighter.
One not taken.
The average colour must be nearly as fair as 37.

Colour of the eyes.—The average corresponds rather to Broca's No. 2 than to his No. 1.

Nine individuals were of No. 1.
Seven individuals were between 1 and 2.
Seven individuals were of No. 2.
Two not taken.

*301 *Ornaments.*—All those examined had had their ears
564 pierced; but most of them wore no earrings, saying it was
[304] not proper for a Purattu Châma Nâyar to wear them. Four individuals, or nearly one-sixth of the whole, however, wore the ordinary earrings; one indeed wore (the only instance) one gold and one silver earring in each ear. Rings of any kind may be worn on the fingers, and the thin iron ring such as is usually worn, was observed occasionally on the ring finger of the right hand, or on the little finger of the left.

The ornaments worn by a few individuals were as follows:—

[789] (1) Aged 23. Two rings on the ring finger of the right hand; one of them tambâk (described already), the other of silver and iron. The last was worn as a prophylactic against fever. Said he had worn it for the previous five days, and during that period he had had no fever! (This individual, by the way, had been vaccinated, and suffered from an attack of small-pox nine years afterwards.)

[237] (2) Aged 35. One copper ring on the ring finger of
[789] the right hand. An amulet of tiger's teeth (as in my
[776] collection) on a string round the waist. The amulet contains nothing, and is worn to protect its wearer from fever. Two silver amulet cases of the usual cylindrical pattern worn on the waist; each contains a mantram written on paper for protection against evil spirits. On

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

one occasion he was frightened when near water, and subsequently was troubled by beings called Pûtams, devils of a very inferior kind which haunt water. He had bad dreams, so consulted a Mâppila priest (a Musalian—a priest of sorts) who gave him the mantrams. Wore also a charm—"to entice the public" as he explained, so that people will, as a rule, like him, please him, flatter rather than annoy him. He got this too from a Mâppila priest—a Mullah.

(3) Aged 24. This man had travelled. At Dvâraka the city of Krishna, the ninth incarnation of Vishnu (in the Kulluva peninsula), a chank above and a chakkra below had been branded on his left upper arm, on his right, a chank above and a lotus below. Each forearm bore the branded mark of an indistinct seal said to represent Krishna, testifying to a visit to the temple at Dharnidara. Had been to Benares and worshipped his ancestors at Gaya (throwing their ashes into the Ganges), an operation which at once removes all necessity to give them any further attention.

Prolificness.—In 9 families, in respect of which notes were taken, there were born altogether 48 children, 30 male and 18 female, or about 53 children to each family.

Following the rule, or rather custom, which governs all marital connexions amongst the Nâyars, a woman of this clan may be mated with a man of the same clan, or with a man of the Kiriyattil clan, but with no other clan. Consequently, a man of this clan cannot be mated with a Kiriyattil woman, for the woman can never mate with one who is not at least her equal.

Names of some of those examined.

Taravâd.	Name.	Occupation.	Age.
Kizhâk Vellat ...	Kundu	Cultivator	42
Panôli	Konti	Do.	22
Karuthôdiyil ...	Gôvindan Kutti ...	Head of his family ...	21
Vellât	Gôpâlan	Cultivator	24
Pudieth	Kanaran	Schoolmaster	23
Puttikapureth ...	Kelukkutti Menon* ...	Writer	36
Karumuthil ...	Kandar, *alias* Kunja Panikkar.* ...	Cultivator	70
Pâlat	Râma Panikkar ...	Do.	56
Kâkkât	Gôvindan	Do.	20

* The affix (Panikkar, Menon) is a title, not necessarily but possibly hereditary.

Note.—I find I have noted one man as Viyyâr Purattu Châma, as if Viyyûr is a sub-clan, and that he marries in his own sub-clan; but I am not sure whether the Purattu Châmas are so sub-divided, and think not.

In three the cephalic length was 20 cm. or over. In nine the nasal height was 5 cm. or over. 141 564*

Face.—The notes made on a few individuals will be set down here. In most cases the supraciliary arches were well marked, and the nasal notch was deep. Nose generally straight, or nasal point slightly raised. Prognathism rare. Lips, especially the lower lip, often very thick.

(1) Very well bred looking. Eyebrows fleshy and thickly marked. Supraciliary arches very slight. Deep nasal notch. Nose straight; nasal point raised very slightly—and very well shaped. In the left ear a very small hole above the usual one in the lobe; I have not noted why it was made.

(2) Supraciliary arches rather prominent. Upper portion of forehead somewhat protuberant. Deep nasal notch. Nasal point raised. Lower lip thick. This man's father was a Nambûtiri. He appears in the plate.

(3) Forehead high. Deep nasal notch. Slight prognathism. Lower lip very thick.

(4) Supraciliary arches not marked. Nasal notch moderate. Lips thin.

Two out of the twenty-five were deeply pitted with small-pox, the Malabar goddess of small-pox, Bhânnâramûrti, having hurt them. In one man the broadest part of the head was above the ears, a little in front. [164] [776]

Figure.—The number of those put down as slight and those put down as medium are about equal.

Hair.—Worn in the usual Malayali fashion which has been described already and, as a rule, plentiful and wavy; treated with gingelly oil, which is sometimes perfumed. The number of individuals whose hair (on the head) was noted as "very thick and wavy" is abnormally large. A young man aged 24 had some white hairs here and there on his head; a man of 35 was a little grey; a man of 39 also; and one of 44 was quite grey. Whiskers or growth of hair on the cheeks were observed in more than half the number of subjects. In several there was hair, fairly thick in some, in the small of the back, and one man had thick hair all over the back. 142 564* [302]

Hair on the chest was "moderate" or "thick" in more than half.

Hair on the arms was "moderate to thick" in about half; in the other half "slight."

Hair on the legs was, as a rule, thick: rarely less than moderately thick. The legs of one man were like those of a bear.

683
the Nâyar would be cut down instantly with a sword: 564
there would be no words. Now that the people of India 783
are inconvenienced with an Arms Act which inhibits [656]
sword play of this kind, and with a law-system under [178]
which high and low are rated alike, the Nâyar has to [201]
content himself with an imperious grunt-like shout for
the way to be cleared for him as he stalks on unperturbed.
His arrogance is not diminished, but he cannot now show
it in quite the same way.

Doubtless the natural habit of seclusion common to 771
Malabar, rendered easy by the wealth of vegetation of
which those who have never visited shores somewhat
alike climatically can have no conception, has favoured
the persistence of earlier forms of belief; but, whatever
may be the reason for it, there is much more of the
extremes of religious belief to be seen amongst the
Nâyars than amongst any other people or caste of
Southern India.

It has been noticed already how that the Malayalis [795]
have, practically, no sects such as obtain throughout the
rest of Southern India. Vishnu, Siva, Bhagavati, Rama—
all these names of the Hindu theogony are meaningless
to them. They do not know one from the other except in
name. Their Hinduism is not that of the rest of South-
ern India.

It is time to come to concrete example, so I will 796
attempt a description of the ceremonial observed at the [773]
Pishâri kâvu—the Pishâri temple near Quilandy on the
coast 15 miles north of Calicut, where Bhagavati is sup-
posed in vague legend to have slain an Asura or
gigantic ogre, in commemoration of which event the
festival is held yearly to Bhagavati and her followers.
It is fairly representative. The deity of the temple [776]
Bhagavati is spoken of as feminine in the spirit of accu-
racy, but it is extremely unlikely whether ten per cent.
of the crowd even thought of sex in connection with
Bhagavati. Sacrifice of goats as part of the ceremonial [782]
was at first denied: it is a mystery too awful to be the
subject of conversation. At the same time, I am inclined
to think that much the weighter reason is that the priests
who cling to this part of the ceremonial are ashamed to
let it be known to the people that they do it. They like
it to be thought that such sacrifice is appropriate to the
inferior races, but that *they* are above it and have nothing
to do with it!

The festival lasts for seven days. When I visited it
in 1895 the last day was on the 31st of March. Before

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

pit, then goes to the western gate of the enclosure, and puts down her plate for an instant while she makes profound salaam to the goddess ere going away. 796 564

And now the procession starts out from the temple, issuing from the northern gate, and for a moment confronts a being so strange that he demands description. Of the many familiar demons of the Malayalis the two most intimate are "Kuttichchâttan" and "Gulikan," who are supposed to have assisted Kâli (who is scarcely the Kâli of Brâhmanism by the by) in overcoming the Asura, and on the occasion of this festival these two demons dance before her. "Gulikan" is represented by the Vannân and "Kuttichchâttan" by the Manûtan who have been mentioned already, and who are under like restrictions with the nine Tîyans. I saw poor "Gulikan" being made up, the operation occupying five or six hours or more before his appearance. I asked who he was and was told he was "a devil." He looked mild enough; but then his "make up" had just begun. He was lying flat on the ground close by the northern entrance of the enclosure, where presently he was to dance, a man painting his face to make it hideous and frightful. This done, his hair was dressed; large bangles were put on his arms, covering them almost completely from the shoulder to the wrist; his head and neck was swathed and decorated; a wooden platform arrangement from which hung a red ornamented skirt was fastened to his hips; there was fastened to his back an elongated Prince of Wales's feathers arrangement (made of plank) the top of which reached five feet above his head; and he was made to look like nothing human. Kuttichchâttan was treated in much the same manner. 796 776 536

As the procession issues from the northern gate of the temple where it is joined by the elephants, Gulikan stands in the northern entrance of the enclosure (which he cannot enter), facing it, and a halt is made for three minutes, while Gulikan dances. The poor old man who represented this fearful being, grotesquely terrible in his wonderful metamorphosis, must have been extremely glad when his three minutes' dance, preparation for which occupied all the afternoon, was concluded, for the mere weight and uncomfortable arrangement of his paraphernalia must have been extremely exhausting. It was with difficulty that he moved at all, let alone dance.

The procession passes round by east, where, at the entrance of the enclosure, Kuttichchâttan gives his dance,

found by south to the westward, and leaving the enclosure proceeds to a certain banyan tree under which is a high raised platform built up with earth and stones. Preceding the procession at a distance of 50 yards are the nine men of the Tîyan caste, mentioned already, carrying kalasams on their heads, and a crowd of women of the same caste, each one carrying a pewter plate—*larger* than the plates used when encircling the fire pit—on which are rice, etc., and the burning wick as before. The plate and its contents on this occasion as well as before is called talapôli. I could not make out that anything in particular is done at the banyan tree, and the procession soon returns to the temple, the nine men and the Tîyan women following, carrying their kalasams and talapôli. On the way, a number of cocks are given in sacrifice by people under a vow. In the procession are a number of "devil dancers" garlanded with white flowers of the pagoda tree mixed with red, jumping, gesticulating, shouting, in an avenue of the crowd in front of the elephant bearing the sword. The person under a vow holds the cock towards one of these "devil dancers" who (never ceasing his gyrations, mad-like gestures and contortions), presently seizes its head, wrings it off, and flings it high in the air. The vows which are fulfilled by this rude decapitation of cocks have been made in order to bring about cure for some ailment.

The procession passes through the temple yard, the enclosure, from west to east, and proceeds half a mile to a banyan tree under which, like the other, there is a high raised platform. When passing by the temple, the Tîyan women empty the contents of their plates in the fire pit as before, and the nine men hand over the arrack in their kalasams to the temple servants. Let us note here as we go along the curious distribution of this rice which is heaped in the fire pit. Two-thirds of it go to the four Tîyans carrying the Pû (flower) kalasams and one-third to the five who carried the Jannakalasams. Returning to the procession, we find it at the raised platform to the east of the temple. On this platform have been placed already an ordinary bamboo quart-like measure of paddy, and one of rice, each covered with a plantain leaf. The principal devil dancer takes a handful of rice and paddy and flings it all around. The procession then visits in turn the gates of the gardens of the four owners of the temple. At each is the measure of rice and the measure of paddy covered with plaintain leaves as before, beside them

796
778 sure what the Nâyars take; perhaps the same. Every one who returns brings with him a swish made of split young leaves of the cocoanut palm.

796
788 A shrine to which the Malayalis, Nâyars included,
782 resort is that of Subramania in Palni, in the north-west corner of the Madura district, about a week's march from
[765] the confines of Malabar near Palghat. Not only are vows
[302] paid to this shrine, but men, letting their hair grow for a year after their father's death, proceed to have it cut there. The plate* shows an ordinary Palni pilgrim. The arrangement which he is carrying is called a kâvadi. There are two kinds of kâvadi: a milk kâvadi (one containing milk in a pot) and a fish kâvadi (one containing fish). The vow may be made in respect of either, each being appropriate to certain circumstances. When the time comes near for the pilgrim to start for Palni he dresses in reddish orange cloths, shoulders his kâvadi and starts out. Together with a man ringing a bell, and perhaps one with a tom-tom, with ashes on his face, he assumes the role of beggar. The well-to-do are inclined to reduce the beggar period to the minimum; but a beggar every votary must be, and as a beggar he goes to Palni in all humbleness and humiliation, and there he fulfils his vow; leaves his kâvadi and his hair and a small sum of money.

Though the individuals about to be noticed were not Nâyars, their cases illustrate very well the religious idea of the Nâyar as expressed under certain circumstances; for between the Nâyars and these there is in this respect little if any differenee. It was at Guruvayûr in November 1895. On a high raised platform under a peepul tree were a number of people under vows, bound for Palni. A boy of 14 had suffered as a child from epilepsy, and seven years ago his father vowed for him (on his behalf) that if he were cured he would make the pilgrimage to Palni. He wore a string of beads round his neck and a like string on his right arm (these were in some way connected with the vow). His head was bent and he sat motionless under his kâvadi, leaning on the bar, which when he carried it rested on his shoulder. He could not go to Palni until it was revealed to him in a dream when he was to start. He had waited for this dream seven years, subsisting on roots (yams, etc.) and milk,—no rice. Now he had had the
[776] long-looked-for dream, and he was about to start. As an instance of the Malayali's ignorance of the Hindu theogony, this youth said he was going to the god "Sri Krishnan" in Palni. It is well known that god there is *not* Krishna.

* [See Plate XI, facing p. 230, Category 116--Analyst]

months. The last is the day following Siva râtri, the well-known Hindu festival. As it was told to me "Food is offered to the ghosts" on these occasions; to all ancestors, male and female. Food of any kind except cooked rice is offered.* It is cooked and placed in the middle room on the west side of the house, where are kept small images in gold or silver of the senior members of the Taravâd (in poorer houses, a stone simply is put to represent the deceased), and the door will be shut for about ten minutes, after which the food will be removed and eaten by the house people. Special worship of ancestors is often made at the temples specially sacred, on the new moons which have been specified, especially on the last. The plate depicts the crowd in the bed of the Ponnâni river on the day following Siva râtri. Men and women bathed and put on clean cloths and, when they had done so put a little burning camphor, sandalwood powder and some other little accessories, on a leaf which was floated down the river after a brief prayer. The scene of the picture adjoins the temple at Tirunavâyi, supposed to be the oldest in Malabar.

SERPENT WORSHIP.

Description, such as is here attempted, of the Nâyar's religion is incomplete so far. There remains to say something of serpent worship and to make some allusion to common superstitions. For description of these I would refer the interested reader to a capital little book entitled "Malabar and its Folk" published by Messrs. Natesan & Co., Madras, by Mr. T. K. Gopal Panniker, B.A., himself a Nâyar as his name denotes. With this gentleman's permission I will reproduce here chapter 12 of his book entitled "Serpent Worship in Malabar":—

"Malabar is a country which preserves to this day primitive institutions of a type peculiarly fascinating to the ethnologist. Of the various kinds of primitive worship still practised in the country that of the serpent occupies a prominent place. Here the serpent is deified and offerings of pooja are often made to the reptile. It has got a powerful hold upon the popular imagination. Each household has got its own serpent deity possessing large powers for good as well as for evil. A separate spot is set apart in the house-compound as the abode of these deities. This reserved spot is converted into a small jungle almost circular in

* Bread made of rice flour may be offered.

776 778 shape. It is overgrown with trees of various kinds, and shrubs, and sometimes medicinal plants also. In the middle of this quasi-circular shrine images usually made of laterite after specified shapes are arranged in certain established methods and a passage is opened to the seat of these images from outside. This spot is so scrupulously reserved, that not even domestic animals are allowed to stray therein. No trees from the place are to be felled down, nor any plant whatever for that matter with any metal or more particularly iron weapons; for these are unholy things, the introduction alone of which inside the sanctified area, not to say the actual cutting down of the tree, is [564] regarded as exceedingly distasteful to these serpent gods. They are not to be desecrated by the touch or even by the approach of [793] a low-caste man. Once in every year at least poojah offerings are made to these [782] gods through the medium of the Numbûdri priests.

796 776 782 "Periodical ceremonies called Pāmbantullel are performed to propitiate them. These are resorted to only on special occasions for the purpose of averting serious visitations from the family. The ceremony is a long complicated process. Any individual drawn from among the Nairs themselves is capable of acting the part of priests on these occasions. A day is fixed for the opening of the ceremony; and a particular plot of ground in the house yard is cleansed and preserved for the performance of the poojahs [532] incidental to the ceremony. Then on the spot certain square figures are drawn, one inside another, and these are tastefully diversified by the interpolation of circular figures and others inside and about them, based on geometrical principles. A peculiar symmetry is observed in the matter of these figures. The figures used in the drawings are usually of various colours, red, white, black and others. Ordinary rice-flour, then again such flour mixed with a combination of chunnam and turmeric powder, thereby making the flour pure red, and burnt paddy husk are chiefly employed. Then a number of other accessories are also required for the ceremony in the shape of lamps, cocoanuts, eatables of various sorts prepared from paddy and rice and some other cooked things, such as rice, bread made of rice, and others. [533] These are properly arranged in the place and poojah is offered by the priest with the slow recitation of *mantrams*, and some holy songs or ballads in memory of these gods. Then a number of Nair women, with perfect purity and cleanliness of person are seated close to each other in a row or two. These women are to preserve sanctity and purity of their persons by a total abstinence from animal food, intoxicants and anything else of an exciting nature for a prescribed period of time; and it is only after the lapse of this period that they become worthy of being admitted to

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

this ceremony. Thus having purged their bodies of all worldliness they are taken into the ceremony and are seated as described before. Now by means of the *mantrams* and poojah the serpent gods are propitiated and in consequence they manifest themselves in the bodies of these female representatives of theirs. The entrance of the gods into their bodies is characterised by a fearful concussion of their whole frame, gradually developing into a ceaseless, shaking, particularly the upper parts. A few minutes afterwards, they begin to speak one by one and their speeches are regarded as expressions of the god's will. Sometimes the gods appear in the bodies of all these females and sometimes only in those of a select few or none at all. The refusal of the gods to enter into such persons is symbolical of some want of cleanliness and purity in them; which contingency is looked upon as a source of anxiety to the individual. It may also suggest the displeasure of these gods towards the family in respect of which the ceremony is performed. In either case, such refusal on the part of the gods is an index of their ill-will or dissatisfaction. In cases where the gods refuse to appear in any one of those seated for the purpose, the ceremony is prolonged until the gods are so properly propitiated as to constrain them to manifest themselves. Then after the lapse of the number of days fixed for the ceremony and after the will of the serpent gods is duly expressed the ceremonies close.

"One other small item of offering to these gods consists in certain ballads sung by the Pulluvar females going about from house to house at stated seasons of the year. They take a pretty large pitcher, close its opening by means of a small circular piece of thin leather which is fastened on to the vessel by means of strings strongly tied round its neck. Another string is adjusted to the leather cover which when played on by means of the fingers, produces a hoarse note which is said to please the god's ears, pacify their anger and lull them into sleep. This vessel is carried from house to house in the day time by these Pulluvar females; and placing the vessel in a particular position on the ground, and sitting in a particular fashion in relation to the vessel, they play on the string which then produces a very pleasing musical note. Then they sing ballads to the accompaniment of these notes. After continuing this for sometime they stop, and getting their customary dues from the family, go their own way. It is believed that these notes and the ballads are peculiarly pleasing to the serpent gods, who bless those for whose sakes the music has been rendered. In consequence of the halo of sanctity that has been popularly thrown round the serpent it is considered a sin of a most heinous nature to kill one of these deified reptiles. The killing of a cobra is regarded with the utmost concern amongst us. In such case the carcase is taken and duly burned with all

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

776 the necessary solemn ceremonials. Sandalwood is the fuel used
766 sometimes. A small pit is dug which is covered with sandalwood
825 pieces and they are set fire to. When the flame burns intensely the body is quietly placed in it, and reduced to ashes together with, in some cases, incense and myrrh. This is believed to mitigate the dangers consequent on the death of the serpent.

776 "The popular conception of the family cobra is that it is a
825 tiny little thing with a full developed hood, and fangs, and possessing a golden tinge; which shine brilliantly in the rays of the sun. At the sight of human beings it gets away to its holy shrine exhibiting a reeling motion on its way thither. It never gets far away from its abode of which it is the perennial guardian.

564 "One striking phase of serpent worship in Malabar relates
776 to the family of Pappanmakkat Nambudris and the singular and effective control they exercise over serpents in general. Their
825 powers are handed from father to son. It is said that this Nambudri household is full of cobras which find their abode in every nook and corner of it. The inmates can scarcely move about without placing their feet upon any one of these serpents. Owing to the magic influence of the family the serpents cannot and will not injure them. The serpents are said to be always at the beck and call of the members of this Nambudri family and render unquestioned obedience to their commands. They watch and protect the interests of the family in the most jealous spirit. In short, these reptiles live, move, and have their being as freely as if they were domesticated animals imbued with supernatural powers.

[755] "Cases of cobra-poison are generally taken to this Brahman family and the headman sometimes summons before him the identical animal which caused injury and it is said successfully effects a cure as if by some mystic and magic influence.

825 "The serpent also plays a conspicuous part in contracts
425 between citizens. The family serpent is in old deeds the subject-matter of sale. The sale of a house compound extends
776 also to the family serpent. The stipulation in these documents invariably is that the family serpents are sold along with the properties; and even in cases of division of family property amongst its several branches of members, the family-serpent is included in the division. Such is the sacred prominence
[753] which has been given to the serpent amongst us. Their anger is said to manifest itself in some member of the family being
[982] struck down with leprosy or some other loathsome disease; while by their propitiation they can be converted into the guardian angels of our households, powerful enough to preserve the prosperity of the inmates as well as to vouchsafe their complete immunity from the attacks of virulent diseases and sometimes even from death."

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

As the subject of serpent-worship is one of fascinating interest, I will add to the preceding extract, which is as interesting as it is accurate, an excerpt from the "Report of the Census of Travancore" for 1891 (the Malayalam year 1066), a book which is perhaps not accessible to many. The shrine which is described therein is in the neighbouring Native State of Travancore, but it is equally representative of one in Malabar :—

"A serpent-kavoo in Travancore. Many places of Hindu worship exist in Travancore under groves locally known as kavoos. There are thousands of these in the country. Lieutenants Ward and Conner estimated their number at 15,000 seventy years ago. This number has, I think, increased since then. These kavoos are all dedicated to minor divinities such as Nàgathans, Nàgarajas, Yekshis, Gandharvas, and Sàstas. Some are of great age and repute and own enormous properties for their maintenance. One of these a well-known sarpa-kavoo in a village 70 miles north of Travancore will be here described. Mythological origin for these sarpa-kavoos is thus stated in the Kéralòlpatti. When Parasuràma's first colonists found Kérala uninhabitable and unimprovable, they abandoned it and returned to their old country. During the time of their absence the Nàgas (serpents) of the lower world, called in popular language Nàgalòkam or Pàtàla, took possession of the newly-reclaimed land and settled there. The colonists returning found that the serpents had usurped their lands, upon which a fight ensued, and Parasuràma arbitrated between his colonists and the Nàgas, wih the result that these latter were to be given a corner of every occupied compound. Thus arose the sarpa kavoos of Malabar which, as I have already described in a previous chapter, is generally at the south-west corner of every Tarvâd garden. And Parasuràma further ordained that the places allotted to the Nàgas were to be left untouched by the knife or the spade, thus enabling the underwood trees and creepers to grow luxuriantly therein. It is to such places that the name of kavoo (or grove) is given. In the kavoo are generally planted several idols of serpents on a stone basement called chittrakoodam, and sometimes a low wall is thrown round to prevent cattle or children trespassing into that space. The propitiation of the serpents is deemed essential for the well-being and prosperity of the householder. Offerings of noorum palum (dough and milk) of cooked rice, lights and songs are

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

made periodically to the serpent gods in the kavoos. The one I am describing here is one of the most important in Travancore. This is known as Mannārsāla. Once upon a time, so says tradition, a male member of this Illam married a girl of the Vettikkòttu Illam, where the serpents were held in great veneration. The girl's parents being poor could give her nothing in the way of dowry. They, therefore, gave her one of the stone idols of the serpent, of which there were many in their house. This stone idol the girl was counselled to take care of and regularly worship; subsequently it is said the girl became a mother and brought forth a boy and a snake, whereupon the snake-child was located in the underground cellar of the house and brought up. The Illam prospered from that day. The woman and the snake are believed to be the cause of the affluence of the family, and to this day to the surname of the male members of that Illom are added, by way of distinction, the names of the serpent god and that of the female. Thus my informant, the present head of the family, is called Vasaki Sridévi Krishnan Nambyadi. To this gentleman I am indebted for the following further details on the snake-worship at Mannārsāla:—He says the name Mannārsāla means the 'unburnt ground.' This refers to an ancient tradition that when the great Khandavavanam was burnt by Agni, the god of fire, this small oasis was spared on the prayer of the serpents, who were the progeny of the serpent offspring of the lady of this Illam. As the Illam could not well accommodate the large number of the serpents that had multiplied, they were removed to a spot on the south of the house, where a magnificent grove has since been grown. In this spot are stone idols put up for the king and queen of snakes known as Nágarája and Nágayekshi, and for various members of the family which, according to my informant, number about 3,000. There are as many stone images in this grove now. In the cellar of the house, as well as in the grove where the stone images are placed, a solution of noorum palum is offered once a year, that is, on the day following the Sivarátri in the month of Másí. The same kind of offering is made to the Chittrakoodom also. About 12½ Edangalies of dough and milk are mixed together and kept in the cellar. Thereafter the door of the cellar is shut for three days, and lest anybody pry into what passes within the cellar, the women of the household cover the crevices and holes of the door

by the big cadjan umbrellas of the female inmates of the Illam. On the third day the door is opened, and whatever remains in the vessel of the dough and milk placed there is thrown into a tank as unfit for human use. The mixing up of noorum palum and the performing of the poojahs are done by the eldest female member of the Illam. The noorum palum is made of rice-flour, saffron powder, cow's milk, water of the tender cocoanut, fruit of the Kadali plantain, and ghee. In the Nálukettu of the house, offerings of noorum palum and cooked rice, as well as kuruthi (a red liquid composed of flour, saffron and chunam), take place every Ayilyam (star) day. Every morning the king and queen of serpents are washed, and an offering of fruit and milk is made to them; in the noon offerings of Vellanivedyam (cooked rice) and afterwards of fried grain (malar) follow. During the month of Kartika, a special poojah called navakom and offering of noorum palum are daily observed. On the Sivarátri day, in the month of Másí, the customary five poojahs and navakom are performed, and in the evening of the same day sacrificial offerings to the serpents and kuruti, as stated above, are made, and at the conclusion of the day's poojahs the idols are taken in procession round the temple. On Ayilyam (star) days, in the months of Purattási and Alpasi, all the serpent idols in the grove and the temples therein are taken in procession to the Illam, and offerings of noorum palum, kuruti and cooked rice are made there in propitiation of the serpent gods. The person who carries the idol of the Nágarája is the eldest female member of the Illam, and the procession is conducted with great pomp and rejoicings. According to my informant, the eldest female member of the house, though married, is expected to lead a celibate life when she becomes the oldest female in the family. During the festive days at Mannārsāla, about 5,000 people assemble to worship and propitiate the serpent gods, and their offerings include gold and silver coins, and gold, silver, copper or stone effigies of snakes, grains of all kinds, pepper, salt, saffron, tender cocoanuts, bunches of Kadali plantain, melons, oil, ghee, sandalwood, silk and other pilgrims. On the day previous to the Ayilyam ceremonial, about two or three thousand Brahmans are fed. The annual expense of this institution and worship at Mannārsāla is estimated at about 2,000 rupees. The kâvu has its own paddy fields and gardens, from the revenues of which it is maintained.

778 776 782 796 776 776 782 [435] [423]

778 All the land about it, measuring a mile square, is said to
423 belong to it. This would be enormous property, as the
[635] taluk where this kavoo is situated is one of the richest in Travancore. A trifle is given by the Sircar every year. If more funds are required, the Nambiyadi is expected to meet them from his own private income. The grove and its temples cover an immense oblong space measuring about 16 acres in extent. The inmates of the Illam are
[688] the poojaries of the gods in this grove. It is believed
[825] that whenever the poojah is not performed with the strictest personal purity or care to small details, the serpent gods get offended, which feeling is exhibited by
778 the largest cobras coming out of the grove. It should be
776 remembered that, as a rule, the serpents are not seen out
825 of their holes, though hundreds of them are known to exist in these large groves. When any is seen, especially if a real cobra, the village astrologer is consulted, who readily finds out the cause of the wrath of the serpent gods, and steps are taken immediately to pacify them by propitiatory ceremonies. The people believe in these ceremonies most implicitly. That is not a mere form with them. In a house in North Travancore, where
776 I lived some years, there used to be seen now and again
825 snakes of all kinds, and in answer to my request to the servant of my landlord to keep the kavoo neat, he invariably said, "Please, sir, order some lights and milk to the kavoo," for this man most sincerely believed that this was the only effective way of keeping out the snakes from view. He did not seem to believe that there was any good in keeping the premises neat and clean. It should here be noted that a true Hindu population never pelt at or harm the snakes when they are seen. They are objects of worship. One of our retired officials told me that some years ago, when he was young and new to the place, he was puzzled by some of the parties present at his cutcherry telling him that the 'god was coming.' The crowd made way, and on rising, this official was horrified to see that the god referred to was a live cobra. This village he spoke of, even now abounds with serpents, but strange to say, these reptiles
[231] seldom harm man. They are evidently become domesticated animals, for we seldom hear of snake-bites in that village, though the general belief is that there are more snakes there than rats. The people also seem to be quite at home with them, for they do not get put out when they see these reptiles."

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

"Immediately the day dawns the heads of the families give to almost all the junior members and servants of the household and to wives and children, money-presents varying from 4 as. to a rupee or two. Children preserve these presents to serve as their pocket money. In the more numerically large families similar presents are also made by the heads of particular branches of the same family to their juniors, children, wives and servants. These presents are intended to be the forerunners of incomes to them more splendid all the year round.

"But one other item connected with the festival deserves mention. On the evening of the previous day, about four or five o'clock most well-to-do families distribute paddy or rice, as the case may be, in varying quantities with some other accessories to the family-workmen, whether they live on the family-estates or not. In return for this, these labourers bring with them for presentation the fruits of their own labours such as vegetables of divers sorts, cocoanut oil, jaggery, plantains, pumpkins, cucumbers, brinjals, &c., in ways such as their respective circumstances might permit.

"With the close of the noon-meal the festival practically concludes, and nothing remains of it for the next day or for the same evening, for that matter. In some families after the noon-meals are over, dancing and games of various kinds are carried on, which contribute to the enhancement of the pleasantries incidental to the festival. As on other prominent occasions, card-playing and other games are also resorted to."

"THE THIRUVATHÎRA FESTIVAL.

"Thiruvathira is one of the three great national occasions of Malabar. It generally comes off in the Malayalam month of Dhanu (December or January) on the day called the Thiruvathira day. It is essentially a festival in which females are almost exclusively concerned and lasts for but a single day. The popular conception of it is that it is in commemoration of the death of Kamadevan, the Cupid of our national mythology. As recorded in the old Puranas, Kamadevan was destroyed in the burning fire of the third eye of Siva, one of the chief members of our Divine Trinity. Hence he is now supposed as having only an ideal or rather spiritual existence, and thus he exerts a powerful influence upon the lower passions of human nature. The memory of this unhappy tragedy is still kept alive amongst us, particularly the female section, by means of the annual celebration of this important festival. About a week before the day, the festival practically opens. At about 4 in the morning every young female member of Nair families with pretensions to decency, gets out of her bed and takes her bath in a tank. Usually, a fairly large number of these young ladies collect themselves in

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

the season which makes their persons shiver and quiver like aspen-leaves before the breeze, becomes to them in the midst of all their ecstatic frolics an additional source of pleasure. In short, all these merely tend to brace them up to an extent the like of which they can scarcely find anywhere else.

"The two items described above, viz., the swinging process and the beating on the water, have each its own distinctive significance. The former typifies the attempt which these maidens make in order to hang themselves on these instruments and destroy their lives in consequence of the lamented demise of their sexual deity, Kamadevan. It is but natural that depth of sorrow will lead men to extreme courses of action. The beating on the water symbolizes their beating their chests in expression of their deep-felt sorrow caused by their Cupid's death. Such in brief is the description of a Nair festival which plays a conspicuous part in the social history of Malabar."

Mr. Gopal Pannikar's chapter on "Local Traditions and Superstitions" ("Malabar and its Folk") has special value, for in it he recounts existing popular belief. He tells us that to demon labourers are attributed the existence of old dilapidated wells and buildings, demons who perform Herculean tasks under orders of a chief. One day these demons having finished their task disturbed their chief when he was playing a game of chess, coming to ask for more work, so he told them to count the waves of the sea; and this is why they are still at work. He tells us why the crow has a long life and the fowl a short one, and how that the former has but one eye, rolling in a socket; how it is that the common squirrel is marked on the back by the fingers of Vishnu; and much that is of interest about the screech owl, the lizard, the crocodile, and many other things. He recalls to my mind the popular belief accounting for the unluckiness which will follow should one see the moon on the Chadûrti night, which I have heard in North Malabar. My note was somehow mislaid. It is that the big-bellied god Ganapati was once upon a time returning home in the moonlight after a repast so generous that his person was much distended, and unable to see his feet, he tripped and stumbled. He looked around to see whether any one had observed his discomfiture. There was no one but the moon. The moon laughed, whereupon he cursed the moon. Hence the belief that whoever sees the moon on that night will be unlucky, probably defamed. Mr. Gopal Panniker, a native of South Malabar, does not mention it, but in North Malabar women are scrupulously careful not to see the moon or be for a moment in the moonlight

776
821 during that night for fear of calumny. There, the men
[184] do not care much. We will now bid adieu to Mr. Gopal Pannikar, but not without thanking him for all he has told us about his own people.

241 Uchâl (Uchaval) is the term used for the first three days of the Malayalam month Makaram, usually falling between the 15th and 20th January. All over Malabar, [243] with the exception of Wynâd, above the ghâts, there are two crops of rice every year, one with the south-west, one [132] with the north-east monsoon. Elsewhere in Southern India rice land is always irrigated, but in Malabar there [776] is no such thing, practically, as irrigation, the heavy rainfall rendering it unnecessary, and the earth goddess—Bhûmi Dêvi—brings forth her fruit under the stimulus of the rain from heaven. She produces the crops as a female produces her children, and from the 1st of the month Makaram, she rests until the cultivator again begins to disturb her, three months later, when the showers preceding the south-west monsoon fall. Uchâl is the period of three days when the earth goddess menstruates. Granaries and all receptacles of grain are closed during Uchâl—they are not even visited. Paddy is not sold. No implement of cultivation is touched. The rice to be used during the three days is pounded out beforehand and kept separate. But it is no season of gloom; rather is it one of festivity. As particular forms of food
241 partaken on specific occasions have an interest of their
252 own, we must not omit description of the Uchâl cake—
262 the Pâla Ata. (Pâla—spathe of the areca-palm, Ata—cake). A paste is made of rice flour and water and spread thickly (about an inch thick) on one side of two pieces of the spathe of the areca-palm, each piece being from 2 to 3 feet in length and about 8 inches wide. Powdered jaggery, scraped cocoanut, powdered ginger, a little garlic and other condiments, are then put in small quantities on the paste. The two pieces of the spathe are then placed together, and they are stitched all round the edges. The whole is covered over with soft red mud and put into a fire where it is kept until the mud covering cracks. The cake is then cooked and ready for eating. It is cut and distributed to members of the family and friends.

564 In parts of Malabar the Tîyan tenants present these
262 cakes to their Nâyar landlords as a token of allegiance
466 or submission. Rice is the only article of food which if
241 prepared by a Tîyan the Nâyar cannot eat; so the Nâyar has no caste scruples about eating the Pâla Ata prepared

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

The Panikkars dabble also in magic. In Plates XVI, XVII are figured four yantrams, selected from a number in my possession as representative, presented to me by a Panikkar. They should be written on a thin gold, silver or copper plate (a yantram written on gold is the most effective), and worn on the person. As a rule, the yantram is placed in a little cylindrical case made of silver, fastened to a string tied round the waist. Many of these are often worn by the same person. The yantram is sometimes written on cadjan or paper. I have one of this kind in my collection taken from the neck of a goat. It is common to see them worn on the arm, or round the neck.

No. I. Aksharamâla.—Fifty-one letters. Used in connection with every other yantram. Each letter has its own meaning, and does not represent any word. In itself this yantram is powerless; but it gives life to all others. It must be written on the same plate as the other yantram.

No. II. Sûlini.—For protection against sorcery, or devils. This is to invoke the goddess and secure her aid. The ceremony brings a blessing to the receiver of the charm.

No. III. Mâha Sûlini.—To be used to prevent all kinds of harm through devils, chief of whom is Pulatini—he who eats infants. May be used also as protective against enemies. Women wear it to avert miscarriage. The letter in the middle, Hûm Mâha Sûlini. That in the rim is Om.

No. IV. Kâla Bhâiravi.—Represents the goddess. The goddess must be pleased *first* by worship. No sacrifice, which is rather odd, as this terrible goddess is generally represented in Southern India as loving blood. The letters do not form any mantram. Each letter has life in itself. Prevents all harm from enemies, and attack by devils.

Other yantrams to be used in much the same way as these are:—

The *Ganapati* yantram. To increase knowledge. To put away fear and shyness.

The *Sarasvati* yantram. To enable its possessor to please his listeners, and increase his knowledge.

The *Panchakshari* yantram, a square containing 81 smaller squares, in each a mystic letter; the whole representing Siva. For persons on whom medicines have no effect. Also against evil spirits. A person out of whom an evil spirit has been driven is perfectly safe ever after with this carried on his person.

754 persons have the evil eye by nature. Potta Kannu, blind eye it is called. A person having the evil eye may, while *thinking evil*, infect man, woman or child by simply looking at them. Those who have the evil eye are generally women: men rarely. The cause is in the eye itself. No evil spirit is in any way connected with it. A woman may affect her own child. A person having the evil eye, looking at a beautiful or a healthy child, will affect it without intending to do so. The injury done through the eye is often unintentional. The power of the eye to do mischief is altogether beyond the volition of its possessor; but it is excessively virulent when mischief is really intended. Colour of the eye matters nothing. Nor is possession of the evil eye confined to [564] any caste. He knew a Nambûtiri who had it. The effect of it on a child is that it becomes lean, feverish, loses its well-favoured appearance, and cries in its sleep. Men and women suffer from headaches and pains in the limbs. Animals are disposed to lassitude and eat little. Cows will not give milk.

791 The Malayan drives away all these unpleasant ail-
755 ments by invoking an evil spirit Vuḍikandan by name: male, having no wife. By means of magic he *forces* [776] Vuḍikandan to do what he requires of him. But how? The process he would not tell. It is secret. That is, all but the drumming. No one outside the Malayan caste may be initiated into the fearsome mysteries. The spirit Vuḍikandan is used for no other rite. The Malayan also drives out evil spirits.

755 Châtu presented me with a mantram, a magic verse,
[824] written with a style on a ċadjan leaf, the common
[212] stationery of Malabar, and told me that whenever any part of my person becomes affected by the evil eye, I should whisper the mantram over a piece of string and tie the string round my leg, or other limb or part of the body which suffers, and cure will take place instantaneously.

He works by day: never by night. A whole day is occupied in driving away injury through the evil eye in a bad case. He need not be starving; in fact has a good meal before he begins. The generous Châtu presented me also with a couple of mantrams such as would cure an easy case of harm through the evil eye, and explained their use.

[539] (1) "Ôm: Namo: Bhagavatôm Srîparamêsvaranûm Srî Pârvati yum Pallivêṭa Nâyaṭinnâî Ezhunellumpôl Srî

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

754
795 until she is allowed to go out. Once out, she rushes like
564 a mad thing into the arms of the Ôḍiyan. He takes her by the hand and leads her to the courtyard or outside it. At once she is stripped naked. The choru kindi (blood—vessel: the shell) being placed near it, the womb expands, and the fœtus is easily removed in a moment.
(824) A few leaves of the mailôsika plant (Polycarpæa spadicea*) are placed as was the other instrument of magic, and the womb contracts to the normal dimensions.

No wonder the Ôḍiyan is feared. By means of this *pilla thilum* he may render himself invisible; in fact he is able to do anything, according to popular belief.

SPIRITS, EVIL AND BENEFICENT, HOW SUBDUED.†

● 776
789 A regular working magician tells us something more of these. The most important of the evil spirits (Dûr murti) are—

Karinkutti.	Bhâiravan.
Kuttichchâttan (we have met him before).	Vanni bhâiravan.
Mâranakutti.	Chotâla bhadra kâli.
Kallâti mûttam.	Dûmapati.
Parakkutti.	Narasihmamûrti.
Ôḍikkutti.	Kâla bhâiravan.
Kuttu bhâiravan.	Ôḍi bhâiravan.

Nearly every man, woman and child in Malabar wears some protective charm against evil spirits. Such charms are also very commonly tied round the necks of cattle, goats and even dogs.

Here follows the recipe for subjection of the spirit Karinkutti into one's service. Of course each spirit is treated always in a totally different way. First you bury a dead black or reddish buffalo. You must not catch your buffalo and kill him. You must find him dead. If you say this is far from easy, I can only remark that the subjection of an evil spirit is not an easy matter. Having buried your buffalo—assuming for the moment that you are a magician, such as the instructions are intended for—you bathe, and while your cloths are wet and clinging to your body, draw the figure chakram, which corresponds to a magic circle, on the ground over the buried buffalo. The

* I am not sure that the correct name is here given for this plant. It may be Alpinia Allughas, the aromatic rhizomes of which are used by natives medicinally.

† For this note, too, I thank Mr. Balakrishna Nâyar.

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

ground is then plastered over with cowdung. Then you mark out with rice flour an eight-cornered chakram, in the centre of which you place a small piece of cadjan leaf, and you place a similar piece at four corners. You sit with your back to the chakram, facing eastwards in the morning and westwards in the evening while performing pûja. This pûja is, I think, addressed to Karinkutti: not in any way to the sun God who is not then visible. For the pûja you must be supplied with fried grain, beaten rice, rice bran, a fowl, toddy, arrack, some flowers of three colours—one of them the tulsi *(Ocimum sanctum)* —sandalwood-paste, camphor, incense. (Note the use of the sacred tulsi in this diabolical incantation!) While the pûja, which I am unfortunately unable to describe (leaving my directions rather lame) is being performed the mûla mantram of Karinkutti is to be repeated 101 times.

In order to do all this you must bathe 7½ nazhikas (about 2¾ hours) before dawn, and complete the pûja before dawn arrives. But even before this you must stand up to your chest in water and repeat the mûla mantram 101 times. And you must repeat the whole thing *da capo* in the evening. The mantram is thus repeated 404 times in the day. You are not done yet, in fact this is only the beginning. The whole thing is done every day for 21 consecutive days; and then you will have the evil spirit Karinkutti entirely at your disposal. The person who remains continent, eats but once a day, cooking his own food, may it is said bring the spirit into obedience in less than 21 days.

Subjection of Vanni Bhâiravan is a much more difficult matter, involving much more elaborate ceremonial, details of which may well be spared the reader as the example which has been given is quite adequate.

And the good spirits—

Bhagavati.	Mûkâmi.
Bbadra kâli.	Vîrabhadran.
Hanumân.	Móhini.
Ganapati.	Sarabha Mûrti.
Subrahmanyan.	

The evil and the good spirits are truly a strange collection of beings! Their names help to illustrate what has been said already, that the Hinduism of the west coast is a strange medley of the higher Hinduism with the lower cult of the country. Bhâirava or Kâla Bhâirava (Bhâiravan of the Telugu country) is elsewhere the object of adoration of what is almost a distinct cult, a kind of

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

mixture of Hinduism with Buddhism,—the kâpâlika religion or cult, the novice in which is "taught how to worship Bhaîri dêvam (Kâla Bhâirava) with human blood, by human sacrifice, by drinking liquor from a Brâhman's skull, and by wearing wooden earrings called Kâmâkshi kundala, symbols of the female principle." * The licentious portion of the programme I will leave out, as we can but glance at the Bhâiravan of other parts of Southern India. There, Bhâirava, or by whatever equivalent he may be called, is a male entity; in Malabar, where sex in deities is not of very much moment, Bhâirava is female. Bhadra Kâli, and even Vishnu under another name, is dragged into the category of evil spirits!

The first five of the good spirits are of course, well known. It is odd to find the terrible Bhadra Kâli bracketed with the genial Ganapati and reckoned as a good spirit. Some of the others are local spirits though rated along with emanations of Hinduism.

A point to be noticed here is that the magic which has been described is of that kind which is intimately connected with religion, in that the aid of spiritual beings is sought, and mischief is wrought by their means.

But there is, of course, another side of magic; the sympathetic, which deals in symbolic hurts and cures; of quite another character, being nothing more than a "misdevelopment of natural philosophy."

These divisions of magic, though tolerably distinct, are not therefore always separated. They are sometimes blended.

It was my good fortune, not very long ago, to acquire possession of a couple of grandhas, or palm leaf books, the subject of which is ordinary magic and black magic. Like all works of the kind (these are in the Malayalam character) they are written in such a manner as to be quite unintelligible to the ordinary reader. Letters, symbols, syllables belonging to no known word are employed to express occult meaning. In fact it is more a memorandum than anything else. One of the grandhas is so obscure that translation of it is next to hopeless, for the few who can do so are altogether unwilling to help one to decipher it. The other is composed of Sanscrit and Malayalam words, spelled abominably; but though relatively clear for a book out of a "Mantravâdis" (Warlock's Magicians) library, it, too, contains many blank spaces which can only be filled up by the professional dealer in

* From an article by the writer in the "Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay," Vol. I, No. 7, 1889.

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

object to be milked; how to cure a headache; to prevent bad dreams, and so on.

N.B.—A mantram must be spoken, breathed, whispered with extreme accuracy. There must be no omission or false accent. Anything of the kind, or wrong pronunciation, destroys its efficacy at once.

FAMOUS MAGICIANS OF MALABAR.

We will close this chapter on magic which, though painfully inadequate, is already rather too long for its purpose, by mention of some of the famous workers in the art. Those who are familiar with the west coast will at once recall to mind the names of three Brâhman families whose scions are famed throughout the land as possessors of stores of magic, and at the same time—so interwoven is magic with religion!—revered for their saintliness. The eldest member of one of these is said to be "an honoured guest throughout the length and breadth of Kêrala; and on certain State occasions in Trevandrum and elsewhere, his presence is indispensable." A well-known tradition relates how that magic came, so to speak, into the family. (It is not necessary to give the family name, even though it is a household word on the west coast).

Long ago in the days of the Perumals, a Brâhman and his friend were belated in the Yakshi paramba (*yakshi*—female demon, *paramba*—garden) near Trichur.* The place was dreary; nothing but palms around. Suddenly they were accosted by lovely damsels who asked them to pass the night under their roof, and soon they were lodged in a sumptuous house, each in a separate chamber. But in the night, the damsels who had, *Lorelei* fashion, attracted the travellers, resumed their demoniacal forms and ate the Brâhman. His friend they could not touch as he had on his person a grandha sacred to Bhagavati; but in the morning he found himself perched on the top of a palm tree underneath which lay the bones of his friend, the Brâhman.

The Brahman's widow gave birth to a son soon after the strange death of her husband. When the boy was eleven years of age, she related to him how he had been made fatherless. He vowed vengeance on the Yakshis and Gandharvas (male demons) and, like a sensible boy, set about preparation for his life-task. It was not long before he had mastered the Vedas and all learning, and having done so he retired to the jungle, where he was

* To this day people avoid this place at night.

engaged in prayer and meditation for seven years. His devotion so pleased Surya, the sun god, that he appeared before him in human form and handed him a grandah, which is to this day the greatest work on magic in existence. The kind attention of the sun god accounts for the prefix "Sûrya" to the family name.

Now well equipped, he made war on the Yakshis and Gandharvas, and compelled the Yakshi who had devoured his father to appear before him. She begged for mercy, offering to serve him faithfully. But he would have none of her and made her enter the sacrificial fire, and she was consumed. Then her Gandharva lover turned up, most inconveniently, and cursed the Brahman magician to suffer death on the forty-first following day. It was now the magician's turn to beg for mercy, and the Gandharva, more merciful than the Brahman had been to the Yakshi, extended it to him. On one condition, however, that on the forty-first day he would worship at the Alangât Tiruvalore temple in expiation. Naturally, he went to fulfil it, and preparatory to worshipping, descended into the temple tank to bathe. All at once he was seized with delirium and raved like a maniac, biting the wooden beams of the bathing shed. He died after enduring frightful agonies. The marks of his teeth are to be seen to this day! Moral—Don't meddle with magic.

Another famous magician was by caste a Ravuthan (a class of Tamil Muhammadans of which there are a few on the west coast) who died about 30 years ago. The story is that having been turned out of his father's house, he was in sad plight, when, awaking from sleep under a tree, a white-bearded Rishi * confronted him and presented him with a grandha of magic, which he put to such good use that he died a very wealthy man. Here are two authenticated stories from the families of Nâyars of good position whom he assisted in each case.

(1) A Nâyar lady, having lost several children in infancy, sought the magician. He came to her house, and asked for a common mud pot, a fowl, some rice and some pepper. With what formality is not said, but the fowl (alive?), the rice and the pepper were put into the pot, which was buried in the ground under the lady's cot. Every day, she ate some of the rice and pepper, and in due time produced a daughter who is now living.

(2) Nearly every young Nâyar woman wears a talisman, protective against evil spirits. The Ravuthan

* It is rather comical, a Rishi appearing to a Muhammadan! Again the queer mixture of religious ideas.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

much the same part as did its maternal and affinal kinsmen to a patrilineal lineage in the lower castes. Individual *mangar* were moreover often of course affines (*bandhus*) to members of the lineage. But among Nayars, the marriage-tie was so slender that individual affinal bonds were not, it seems, strong enough to unite the lineage to the rest of the sub-caste group. This was achieved instead by a hereditary relationship between lineages as groups, which persisted irrespective of the making and breaking of marriage ties between them.

In these retainer sub-caste groups the *tāli* must be tied by an *enangan*. Each girl had a separate bridegroom, usually a youth who might have already formed *sambandham* relationships of his own. The *tāli*-tiers were chosen at a local assembly. The choice was made by the village astrologer, who compared the horoscopes of the girls with those of suitable young men and fixed the auspicious date and time for the ceremony to take place.

In Kiriyattil, Samantan, and royal lineages, whose women frequently or invariably married men of higher sub-caste, the *tāli*-tier was chosen from the appropriate higher sub-caste. Women of village headmen's lineages were commonly 'tied' by men of their district headman's lineage, and Sāmantan women and Cochin princesses by Nambūdiri Brahmans. Calicut princesses had the *tāli* tied by men of Kodungalur, one of the ancient ruling lineages which had been conquered by Calicut. Similarly, Walluvanād princesses had the *tāli* tied by men of the lineage of Beypore, a more ancient and therefore higher-ranking lineage than their own of an adjacent small kingdom which was also feudatory to Calicut. In these sub-castes the 'bridegroom' was usually an elderly man.

The account which follows was given by Sūdra Nayars of Pālakkara, the Cochin village where I worked. In Pālakkara, the *tāli*-rite in its full form has not been performed for twenty-two years, and, like many of the traditional rites of Nayars, it is doubtful if it will ever be performed again. This description refers to this most recently held ceremony, at which the *tālis* were tied for nineteen girls, ranging in age from two to twelve, of a lineage comprising twelve property-groups.

The ceremony required the co-operation of the whole village, which at that time was coterminous with the *tara*. It was held in the lineage's oldest ancestral house. A shed of bamboo and palm-fronds was erected before the house, the first corner-post, of areca-palm wood, being planted ceremonially by the carpenter. A man of the temple-servant caste of Kurups drew a picture of the Malabar goddess Bhagavadi on the floor of the shed, of the type drawn in the village Bhagavadi temple at festivals to the goddess. Nayar men of the village then went and cut down a branch of the milk-exuding tree of Bhagavadi from near the village temple. This they planted near the corner-post in the floor of the shed, in order, informants said, 'to bring Bhagavadi to the *tarawād* and set up a temple in the house'. A plank of wood of the same tree was set in the shed for each girl to sit on in turn.

All *enangar* of the lineage, and representatives of every other Nayar house in the village, attended the four days of ceremonies. On the first morning, the girls went in procession to the shrine of the lineage's *dharma devi* (goddess of moral law). This goddess, represented by a stone image, is the lineage's private Bhagavadi. She is propitiated annually with cooked food to ward off sickness and misfortune. Similar offerings were made now, and the procession returned. Young men of the lineage then went to meet the bridegrooms, who arrived on elephants with their male age-mates, accompanied by music. At the gate married women of the lineage met them carrying brass plates each containing a lit wick, paddy, rice, and a spray of coconut flowers. The bridegrooms' feet were washed by brothers of the girls and they were seated in the marriage-shed. Near the picture of Bhagavadi were laid paddy and rice, coconut flowers, the sacred brass lamp of the household, and a tray of eight auspicious objects (*ashtamangalyam*). These included a woman's loin-cloth, a rouge-box, a bell-metal mirror, an arrow, a coconut-spray, rice, paddy and a lit wick; they figure also in the Nambūdiri

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

marriage rite. At the auspicious time, each girl was led in turn by her brother from the house and seated on the plank. At a sign from the astrologer, the Brahman priest (called Elayad, a low sub-caste of Nambūdiris who officiate at Nayar funerals) handed the *tāli* to the bridegroom, who tied it round the girl's neck. The nineteen couples were then secluded in the house for the remaining three days and nights of the rites. Informants said that in modern times when lineages were often large, the couples numerous and the girls sometimes infants, cohabitation would be unlikely. It was not, however, forbidden, and appears formerly to have been required. It is clear that the rite was ritually if not actually a defloration ceremony, as is indicated by the saying *Tāli kettiu amma āyi* ('having had the *tāli* tied, a girl becomes a [married] woman').

Next morning the party reassembled without the couples, and offerings to Bhagavadi took place. The participants were a Sūdra Nayar oracle (*velichchappād*), a Vattekad (oil-monger) Nayar sacrificial priest, and a Nayar boy who accompanied the oracle, carrying a staff to the top of which was tied a brush of coconut flowers. These officiants perform similarly by hereditary right at the annual Bhagavadi temple festival. The priest offered rice, paddy, coconuts, incense, a burning lamp, and toddy before the branch of the milk-tree, following which he sacrificed a cock and poured out a vessel of red blood-like liquid. The oracle then donned a waist-band and anklets of bells and took a sickle in his hand. (These symbolize the power of Bhagavadi: when he dons them it is believed that she enters and possesses the oracle.) Accompanied by loud music, he leapt wildly in the air, shouting hoarsely and chopping his forehead with the sickle till blood flowed down. In this frenzy he called out to the host *kāranavan* that the goddess was appeased by his offerings. His possession then subsided and his insignia were removed.

Bhagavadi is the Malabar goddess of war, smallpox, and the soil. Her idol, in the Nayar village temple, is a hollow cylindrical stone, a symbol of the vagina, as the Brahmanical idol of Siva is the lingam, a symbol of the phallus. Bhagavadi is also worshipped as the oracle's sickle, as a picture drawn in chalks on the floor, as the milk-tree (*Alstonia scholaris*), and as the ancestral sword of a Nayar lineage. She is believed to have protected the Nayars in war. She is fierce and vengeful, her chief power being to inflict smallpox. She is propitiated by similar rites during smallpox epidemics, on the sixteenth day after a smallpox death, and on the last night of her annual temple festival, during which she is angry with the villagers who must observe sexual continence.

The remainder of the second day, and the third day, were devoted to feasting and music. On the fourth morning each couple went to the village bathing pool where, hand-in-hand, they took a purifying plunge-bath. Then, decked in fine clothes, they returned to the lineage house. In the kitchen each couple ate a meal from the same loaf. The company was then fed, but on this day, alone of all days, women ate before men. The bridegrooms received clothing and foodstuffs from the *kāranavan* and departed for their respective homes.

In Pālakkara the *tāli*-tier might remain with his bride as her first *sambandham* lover. At the last *tāli*-rite two of the nineteen bridegrooms remained in association with their brides, though one abandoned his shortly afterwards. The other seventeen girls formed unions with other men of the village shortly after puberty. In all *tāli*-rites in this area, however, the 'bridegroom' remained the ritual husband of his 'bride' throughout his life, though he need never visit her again. At his death, the 'wife', together with her children by whatever physiological father, must observe fifteen days' pollution. Death pollution was otherwise traditionally observed only for matrilineal kin: not until recently was it observed for the *sambandham* lover and the physiological father. The *tāli*-tier of a woman was regarded, moreover, as the ritual father of her children. If they knew him, the children called this man *appan* (the Tamil word for 'father', used for the *genitor* by Tiyyars and Christians) as distinct from *acchan* (originally

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll Nayar

Rangachari (1909, V, p. 320), reports that in Travancore, the 'leading villager' gave his consent and received gifts from the bridegroom 'as if to recompense him'. This recalls the statement of one informant of Pālakkara, who said he had heard a rumour that in ancient days, the Aaān of the village had the right to deflower retainer-Nayar women, a right which he might forgo on payment of a sum of money.[1]

The *tāli* is, as Thurston & Rangachari observe, shaped like a leaf of the *Ficus religiosa* (pipal) tree (*aswatha*). This tree is worshipped by Nayars, Nambūdiris, and Tamil Brahmans as an embodiment of the Sanskrit god Vishnu. It is said to symbolize male creative power, the female tree with which it is associated being the *teppu* or margosa (*Melia Azadirachta*).[2] In the Tamil country, the two trees are frequently planted together in a mock-marriage ceremony, so that the creeping stems of the margosa may twine round the pipal tree like the arms of a faithful wife round her husband. Among Nayars, Tiyyars, Nambūdiris, and Tamil Brahmans, barren women are counselled to march a hundred and eight times round the ficus tree to obtain children. We are therefore probably justified in regarding the *tāli* as a phallic symbol, presented to the bride as a sign 'that she may now do what she pleases'.[3]

Innes (1908, p. 174) and Krishna Menon (1894) reports that, traditionally, the bridegroom's party approached the house flourishing weapons and shouting a war-cry. Later, before tying the *tāli*, the bridegroom laid his sword across his lap, and the girl took an arrow and a mirror in her hand. Mateer (1883) says that in Travancore, if the family were too poor to perform the ceremonies, the girl's mother might tie her *tāli* before a sword or a clay idol representing Kāma Devan, the Hindu god of passion.[4] Similarly, since the traditional ceremony died out, many Pālakkara mothers take their immature daughters to some Brahmanical temple dedicated to Vishnu (the god of marital and domestic prosperity) and themselves tie the *tāli* before the god.

Fawcett (1901, pp. 229–32) observes that the girl's brother carried her into the marriage hall from the house, bore her three times round it, and seated her to the left of the bridegroom; Innes (1908, p. 174) remarks that she might be carried there either by her brother or her *kāranavan*. On the fourth day, after their bath, the couple returned to the girl's ancestral house to find its doors shut against them. The bridegroom must force open the doors before he could take his seat with his bride in the kitchen where they ate a meal together. Alternatively, he might enter the house last in the procession, when boys of the girl's lineage pelted him with plantain fruits, which he must ward off with his shield.

According to Innes (*ibid.* p. 173), before the rite the girl was secluded for three days and nights in an inner room of the house, with a brass hand-mirror in her right hand, an arrow in her left, and the eight auspicious objects before her. On the second morning she went to the bathing pool, on the bank of which she must, after bathing, jump thrice over a brass vessel of water with an unhusked coconut on top, overturning both at the third time.

I turn to the rite in the royal lineages. In the Cochin lineage, which prides itself on ancient, 'true' Kshattriya descent, the rite took the form of a Brahmanical marriage ceremony with Sanskrit *mantras* from the Grihya Sutras. It was performed separately for each girl before puberty by a Nambūdiri, who must actually deflower the girl on the night of the ceremonies. The bridegroom received a fee and departed after four days. The girl might then cohabit

[1] Dr Aiyappan (1932) similarly reports that the Aaān in some areas deflowered Nayar women at a ceremonial initiation.

[2] For a discussion of the symbolic significance of this tree see Dubois (1906, p. 652).

[3] My interpretation of the *tāli* as a phallic symbol is the more likely in that among Tamil Smartha Brahmans of Tanjore, the marriage *tāli* bears engraved upon it a *lingam*, the phallic emblem of Siva.

[4] This modern rite recalls the ceremonial marriage of the Devadasis (temple-dancers and prostitutes) in the Tamil country, in which the dedicated girl's *tāli* is tied by the temple priest before the god of the temple, or, if a girl fails to become dedicated to a god before puberty, by her mother in the presence of a sword. The 'marriage' is followed after puberty by the nuptials, at which a wealthy high caste man of the neighbourhood passes the night with the girl as the first of her lovers.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWII Kerala AWII
Nayar.

Taravād is believed to be guarded by a group of snake-gods (*nāgas*) who reside in the small grove in the south-east corner of the ancestral gardens. If they are offended, the snakes inflict the *tarawād* with barrenness among women, disease, and child-deaths. They are propitiated by the low caste of Pulluvar. A Pulluvar and his wife come to the Nayar or Tiyyar grove and draw figures of the serpents in green, red, yellow, and black. They sing songs of entreaty to the snakes, and play on a musical instrument, while one or more women of the propitiating *tarawād*, who have observed sexual continence and food taboos for several days previously, dance round the figures with hair streaming. The snakes then 'enter the bodies' of these women, who behave in a dissociated manner and speak with the voice of the possessing snake-spirit, announcing to *tarawād* members the kind of propitiation necessary to overcome their wrath. Since they are the guardians of the *tarawād*, are jealous of the marital sexuality of women born into it, can inflict them with barrenness, and periodically 'enter into' them, it seems likely that these totemic snakes are unconsciously regarded as phallic symbols of the *tarawād*'s male forbears (whether matrilineal or patrilineal). Their 'possession' of the women would thus reflect the incestuous desires of women towards men of the parental generation in the *tarawād*, and secondarily towards their brothers.

I have discussed in general terms the probable existence of unconscious incestuous desires between the individual and members of the parental generation and, as an extension of this, between siblings. We must now face the problem of whether, in the matrilineal castes, a regular Oedipus complex exists: that is, of whether a man unconsciously wishes to kill his father and appropriate his mother, and whether a girl harbours murderous wishes towards her mother and incestuous ones towards her father.[1]

There seems little doubt that in the matrilineal as in the patrilineal castes, a 'normal' Oedipus complex must develop in early infancy. Even among South Malabar Nayars the physiological function of the male in procreation is clearly acknowledged, and a child is expected to resemble its father as well as its matrilineal kin. The Nayar infant must, moreover, be aware of the marital relationship between its parents, since it commonly sleeps in the mother's room until the age of about four or until the next sibling is born. At about the age of five to six, however, a change takes place in the relationship between a South Malabar Nayar child and its parental generation, and thus, we may suppose, in its unconscious attitudes to these figures. A boy now comes under the discipline of his mother's brothers, and a relationship of reverence with underlying hostility begins to be formed. A girl becomes aware that her mother's brothers are her ultimate guardians and, though she may still approach them freely, she must submit to them. The father drops into the background. In a traditional household, whereas he might play with them freely as babies, he may not now interfere in the upbringing of his children. Even today, he may be already divorced and replaced by another husband: in Palakkara sixteen out of seventy Nayar sibling groups containing children under the age of fifteen had no contact with the *genitor* or his kin. The mother's brother thus takes over a great part of the role of *pater*. The relationship admits, however, greater conscious hostility than does the patrilineal father-child relationship. Despite the reverence demanded in public, Nayar men sometimes remark privately that they harbour murderous feeling towards their *kāranavan*: several have in fact killed him. Such conscious hostility to the father would be almost unheard of in a high patrilineal caste. The partial avoidance required between a man and his sister's son, and the extreme formality of their behaviour, reflect this underlying hostility. The relationship with the elder brother is, in etiquette, modelled on that

[1] My data, as far as Malabar matriliny is concerned, contradict Malinowski's (1916) theory that the Oedipus complex is absent from the start in matrilineal societies and is replaced by the wish to marry the sister and kill the maternal uncle. They confirm Ernest Jones's (1924) conclusion that a normal Oedipus complex exists in matrilineal as in patrilineal societies, but that in matriliny repressed incestuous desire for the mother is extended to an unusual degree to the sister, and much unconscious hostility to the father deflected towards the mother's brother. Roheim's (1950, ch. 3) refutation of Malinowski's view and his analysis of the Oedipus complex of Normanby Island are also relevant.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWII Kerala AWII
Nayar
Tiyyar

and the five products of the cow. This ends their pollution and also the prohibition on using oil for cooking and bathing during the pollution period. The ability of a low caste man to purify a family from pollution (when in other contexts he is less pure than they) is an anomalous situation common in South India which has not so far been explained in sociological terms. It is paralleled by the fact that the washerman's purifying cloth is used by a woman to bathe in after menstruation; the washerman must also supply a similar purifying cloth for Nayars and Tiyyars to stand on when they are being purified by cow's excrements from the pollution of death. In some contexts, the Nayars recognize this anomaly, and thus employ two priests for death-rites, the lower caste funeral priest for ties during pollution, and the Elayad, a low sub-caste of Nambūdiris ranking above Nayars, to purify them and instruct them in final rites to the spirit. The Elayad also consecrates the South Malabar Nayar *tāli*, so that the Tiyyar barber may be compared to him as a functionary in the *tāli*-rite. In addition, the barber acts as a priest in Tiyyar family shrines in North Malabar dedicated to Bhagavadi and to ancestors. Finally, as barber, he performs the ceremonial hair-cutting of a Tiyyar boy at the age of three, and the ceremonial shaving of a Tiyyar man at a funeral and before other ritual occasions, including the *tāli*-rite of his nieces and daughters.

I suggest that the barber, both as a polluting 'younger' person and as a holy one who can conduct Tiyyar ceremonies and purify them from pollution, is both a son-surrogate and a father-surrogate for Tiyyars. His association in death-ceremonies with the spirits of Tiyyar leads me to suspect that he is identified with the ancestors, who, in psycho-analytic terms, collectively represent the father.[1] In this role the barber would resemble the washerman, his 'twin' in the caste-hierarchy, who in masked dances impersonates the dead ancestors and local heroes of both Nayars and Tiyyars in North Malabar and of Tiyyars in the south, and, while possessed by them, declares their will to the *tarawād*. We have seen that the washerman, like the barber, may be viewed as a proxy bridegroom to the Tiyyar or Nayar girl in the puberty rites where he instructs her to perform offerings to the lamp as a phallic symbol and sings lewd songs to enhance her fertility.

The barber is also, however (because of hypergamous Tiyyar-barber marriages), a son-figure, and in general caste-terms a junior to the Tiyyar. In this role his ability to act as a kind of bridegroom at the *tāli*-rite reminds us of the practice of South Malabar Tiyyars, who select a small boy of an affine *tarawād* as proxy bridegroom in the rite. Until about the age of eight, a boy may touch mature women of his own or another lineage. The fact that the small bridegroom is carried into the marriage-shed in the arms of his maternal uncle renders harmless his 'marriage' to the bride: he is a child, brought by a father-figure who adjures him to perform the rite. This fits my hypothesis that the immature girl in these castes is unconsciously likened to the mother: only a father-figure, an infant, or some generalized 'polluted' yet 'holy' figure may approach her with impunity.

My hypothesis that the virgin is unconsciously associated with the mother as a forbidden sexual object rests partly on the fact that in these rites the girl is brought into association with Bhagavadi, the mother-goddess of Nayars and Tiyyars. A branch of her milk-tree is set

[1] A psychoanalyst might probably see in the barber's other roles that of father-surrogate. Hair-cutting and shaving are in many parts of the world likened to castration or to a weakening of sexual power. Among Tiyyars they are ceremonially performed for boys at the age of three to five, and for men immediately after a death in the family. The ceremonial head-shaving of a boy (like the ceremonial ear-boring by the goldsmith, another low-caste functionary) is believed to reduce his *sakthi* (strength) and render him immune to the evil eye of the envious or to attacks from ghosts. It is possible to argue that the rite is a symbolic castration, performed to protect the child, in phantasy, from the danger of real castration at the hands of his jealous father, whose form is projected in the evil eye and in ghosts who attack small children. After a death, the ritual shaving of the heir is part of a complex of rites to ward off the vengeful anger of the spirit. It goes along with abstention from intercourse and from sexually stimulating foods, and the carrying of a knife (phallic talisman?) by the heir to ward off the murderous attack of the spirit. I associate head-shaving, like sexual abstinence, with symbolic castration of the mourner to avert the castrating and murderous wrath of the deceased whom, in his unconscious mind, the mourner himself has murdered.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar
Tiyyar

588 831 182 776 up in the marriage shed and the rites are conducted before it. Among Nayars it is planted near the sacred corner-post which as we saw is probably a phallic symbol. Among Tiyyars a small branch of the tree is tied to the marriage-pole, thus indicating, perhaps, that Bhagavadi is being 'married' to the divine male tree. The girl is seated upon a plank of the milk-tree. Among Nayars the *tāli*-rite is followed by offerings to appease the angry mother.

776 Bhagavadi or Devi (generic terms meaning goddess) is equated by Nayars and Tiyyars with Durgha and with Kali or Bhadrakali, fierce puranic goddesses who were created by Siva and are his consorts, though, unlike Parvathi his 'regular' wife, they are not represented as actually married to him. Bhadrakali is a black, hideous-faced demon; she is encircled with snakes, has a garland of skulls, four hands holding weapons, long claws and tusks, a protruding tongue, and a mouth dripping blood. She rides upon a lion. She is said by Nayars to have been born from fire which issued in anger from the third eye of Siva to destroy the sacrifice which Daksha, Siva's father-in-law, had prepared for the other gods to the exclusion of Siva himself. Bhadrakali destroyed the sacrificial objects and beheaded Daksha.

Durgha (who is often not distinguished by Malayalis from Kali) rides on a tiger and has ten hands holding weapons. These were given to her by the gods as emblems of their power, to enable her to kill Mahisasura, a buffalo-demon who had gained control of the worlds of gods and men. Both Durgha and Kali have destroyed, beheaded, dismembered, and eaten many other demons in their wars on behalf of the gods.

776 793 Other myths of Bhagavadi temples describe the goddess's devotion to Siva and attacks on demons who opposed him. In the myth of the temple at Cape Comorin, Bhagavadi is a virgin with eight brothers who divided between them the kingdom of Bharatha Kandam. Bhagavadi took the southernmost portion round Cape Comorin. Here she did penance to Siva and, when he promised her a boon, desired to copulate with him. He replied that she must first kill Vanasuran, a demon who, by excessive penance to Siva, had gained control of the earth. Vanasuran heard of Bhagavadi and came to marry her. He found her as a beautiful maiden swinging in her garden. She requested him to bring her the flowers of three kinds of fig tree, but, when he did so, she caused them to disappear.[1] Seeing she would not yield, Vanasuran took his sword and fought the virgin who, appearing in terrible form, pierced him with her own sword and cut off his head with her disc. His body disappeared in a hole in the earth, from which sprang a bathing-pool called *chakkra-therrtham* ('disc-water').

775 588 776 [782] Bhagavadi is represented by Nayars and Tiyyars both as a mother and as a virgin. The dead Nayar or Tiyyar virgin can, moreover, herself become a species of Bhagavadi. It was formerly believed that if a girl died before the *tāli* was tied, her jealous and malignant spirit hovered round the earth inflicting misfortune on her *tarawād*. She was called a *Kannichāru* ('dead virgin'); a shrine must be erected to her and offerings made by her kin. It is this curious equation of the mother and the virgin which leads me to believe that the virgins for whom the *tāli* is tied (and who are associated with Bhagavadi in the rites) are also unconsciously likened to the mother.

793 182 776 831 I suggest an interpretation of the Bhagavadi myths which subsumes under one theory both the myths and the *tāli*-rite. That Bhagavadi is their chief deity reflects the supreme importance of the mother in the life of the Nayar and Tiyyar man. The myths show repressed hostility to and fear of the mother which, because of the values of the kinship system, cannot be made conscious and expressed openly in social life. That Bhagavadi dismembers and eats the demons reflects the infant's projection upon the mother of his own oral frustrations in the period of suckling (commonly prolonged to the age of three or four, but abruptly terminated if a sibling is born) and his desire to attack and tear to pieces the mother. Bhagavadi's snake ornaments, weapons, projecting tongue, tusks, claws, and lion and tiger

[1] One of the trees was the *Ficus religiosa* (see p. 42).

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar
Tiyyar

vehicles, indicate that she is a phallic mother, the 'mother with a penis' who is a common phantasy for European children too. It is well known that in the unconscious minds of Europeans, the phallic mother usually and perhaps always represents the mother armed with the father's penis, which she has acquired in an act of sadistic intercourse. The infant's fear of approaching her sexually thus becomes a fear of being attacked and castrated by the angry penis of the father which the mother has taken as her weapon. In the myths the demon may in each case be interpreted as a son-figure, for in each case he acquires power as a devotee who does penance to Siva, the father-god in the Tamil and Malayalam countries. The son attacks the mother sexually, but she is pre-armed by Siva or by the other gods with their weapons. In some myths she uses their phallic symbol, the sword (a common castration symbol), to behead the demon-son. In the myth of Vanasuran she pierces the demon with the sword and then kills him with her disc. I associate being killed by means of this circular weapon with being castrated by the vagina in intercourse, and the disappearance into the hole with annihilation by being swallowed up in the mother's body, a phantasy which we see too in the fear of being eaten by the mother. Behind this fear may lie an unconscious desire to return to the womb. This interpretation is likely because bathing in the *chakkra-theertham* at Cape Comerin is a means of becoming pure from sin, and purificatory bathing, a common rebirth symbol.

I suggest that the fear of deflowering a virgin issues from this association of her with the phallic mother since, like the mother, she is still in the possession of her lineage kinsmen and defended by their sexual organs, which (in phantasy) they or she may use to castrate or attack an aggressor. We saw how, in the Nayar rite, the lineage men in fact attack the bridegroom with 'phallic' missiles (plantain fruits) and how the ritual play with swords suggests a sexual attack and defence.

A further reason why the *tāli* must be tied before puberty may be that the menstruous woman is particularly closely associated with the mother, menstrual blood (see the blood-dripping mouth of Bhadrakali) recalling the infantile phantasy of parental intercourse as a sadistic attack by the father in which the mother is wounded and bleeds, but castrates him and acquires the penis. A virgin who had menstruated but was still in the possession of her lineage kinsmen would thus be too terrifying a creature to deflower. This may be why a woman who matured before the *tāli* was tied (i.e. before she was symbolically deflowered and removed from the sexual protection of her kinsmen) was considered irrevocably polluting, a creature to be driven from caste and with whom it would be madness to cohabit. It was therefore desirable to make her attain puberty fictitiously in advance by the mock menstruation ceremony, and then actually or symbolically to deflower her before she was in fact mature. Even so, the bridegroom must be a polluted low caste person, whose ritual purity could not be further endangered, or a father-figure to the society at large, or a small boy whose act appears innocuous, or a woman on behalf of her son.

My association of the menstruous woman with the phallic, blood-dripping divine mother rests on the fact that, like the goddess, she is 'sacred' and may not be approached; that she is armed with a knife to ward off evil spirits; and that she is credited with the power to make men impotent (castrate them) if they foolhardily copulate with her. It must be noticed too that the obscene songs sung by the washermen at a Nayar or a Tiyyar girl's first menstruation are sung on another occasion, namely the annual Bharani festival to the Bhadrakali of Kodungalur temple in Cochin. In this festival the temple, normally closed to the 'polluting' castes below Nayars, is for seven days flung open to them and deliberately polluted. On the day previous to Bharani, Nayar and low caste pilgrims, drunk with toddy, armed with long staffs, and carrying live cocks, flock in thousands to the temple from all parts of Malabar. On the road they sing obscene songs to the goddess and revile in filthy language women whom they meet. [533]

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8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWll Kerala AWll Nayar

Dr. Marett himself has, with great truth, insisted on as the essence of religion.[1] I have called such practices magical, not only because they lack the emotional and the psychological elements of religion, but also because the fundamental presupposition in such performances is the power wielded by the magician, the "*orenda*" which he has acquired, over the ghosts.

This is very clear from the Nāyar ideas of *Thēvar* and *Pisāchu*. *Thēvar* can be propitiated but never conquered; while a *Pisāchu* (or ghost), though superior to man in power, intelligence and will-to-do-harm, can be rendered harmless and kept under control by magical practices. The former conception is clearly Hindu and relates only to Hindu gods. The spiritual ideas of the Nāyars themselves seem to be confined to ghosts, spirits, and to a comic elf called *Kutti-Chāttan*.

Before we proceed to consider them, the position of the magician in the Nāyar community has to be made clear. It is generally taken for granted by anthropological writers that wherever social life is regulated by magical practices the *Shaman* comes to be held in reverence. It is very interesting, therefore, to notice that the Nāyars never accepted the superiority of the magician, and never accorded him any privilege. The magico-medicine man is, on the other hand, considered to be a sort of servant-in-attendance on a nobleman's family, something like a family doctor. The explanation that it is due to the warlike character of the Nāyars is clearly inapplicable, as the magician attained kingly powers among the Masai, for example, whose society is also organised for purposes of war. The fact that the *Kāniyān* (or the magico-medicine-man) is not only not venerated, but actually considered an inferior, may be more due to the effect of caste-system, which places Nāyars high among the social scale.

The *Kāniyān* is, of course, recognised as a necessary person. He gets from all the houses of the village settled remuneration, mostly in coco-nuts. He is not otherwise paid for ordinary consultation, and he is bound to attend to every case in the village without fail. For special exertions of his magical powers he has special payments settled by village custom. He has power, both inherited and acquired, to cast-off spirits, to perform preventive magic, and keep general control over ghosts.

There are supposed to be three kinds of spirits, *Prētam*, *Bhutam*, and *Pisāchu*. A *Prētam* is the spirit of a dead man. The ghosts of men who died in the ordinary course of events are not really *Prētams*, because they do not wander about to overpower people and drink their blood. It is generally the ghosts of men who died as a result of foul play, or by accidents such as drowning, or by terrible diseases such as smallpox and cholera that wander about at nights. A *Bhutam* is seen generally in marshy districts and does not always hurt people unless they go very near him. A *Pisāchu* is a general spirit of the air causing such diseases as smallpox. All these

[1] Threshold of Religion: Essays on Pre-animistic Religion, the Birth of Humility, and Is Tabu negative magic?

8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWll Kerala AWll Nayar

spirits can be seen. At night their mouth is full of fire of different colours, but it throws out no rays. That it throws out no rays is important because therein is supposed to lie the distinction between an ordinary light and the fire in the mouth of a spirit.

The *Prētam* is supposed to hover round its burial place or the place of its accident. Everyone is warned off such a place at night time. The hours during which these *Prētams* appear are between 9 in the evening and 3 in the morning. It must be noticed here that the *Prētam* of a "black-magician," as distinct from a social magician like the *Kāniyān*, has more power to do mischief: it has more "*orenda*," so to say. The man who practises black magic invariably dies a violent death, and his *Prētam* hovers round the scene of his former activities.

"Man dreads above everything else," says S. Reinach,[1] "illness and death, punishments inflicted by the angry spirits with which his imagination peoples this world." This is absolutely true with regard to the Nāyars. Disease is generally believed either to be the outcome of offending a god or due to the magic performance of interested relations. Preventive sacrifice is very common, and every year all respectable Nāyar families perform some sort of propitiation ceremonies in the village temple. If a whole village is ravaged by some epidemic, the villagers inquire into the matter through the astrologer, and if he finds, as he usually does, that it is due to the wrath of the village god or goddess, ceremonies of various kinds are at once undertaken and goats are offered as sacrifice, and sometimes a *Desavelathu*, a procession of the people with images, around the village is performed.

But such occurrences are rare. Only epidemics are put down to the wrath of offended gods. Other diseases as well as misfortunes are put down to the influence of *Prētams*, bribed into action by jealous or covetous relatives. When any great misfortune, such as a succession of deaths, happens in a family, the first thing that is done is to consult the astrologer, who is sure that a ghost is working it under the influence of magic. His prescription is, of course, counter-magic, to be performed by himself. An offence to a god can easily be rectified if one does some elementary sacrifices, but the performance of counter-magic is neither so inexpensive nor so easy. First of all one has to get rid of the evil already done. For that elaborate ceremonies may be necessary. Secondly, ceremonies to keep one immune from future attacks are essential. If it is any woman who is possessed of the devil, and it is women who generally suffer from these things, an expensive and elaborate devil dance called *Kolam Thullal* has to be performed. For this the village has to be informed, and each family in the village is supposed to contribute something in kind to the expenses and take its share in the work. The ceremony is as follows:—

Preparations for the dance must begin a good many days beforehand. The *Kāniyān* of the village with twelve others of his people come to the house where the

[1] *Cults*, p. 27.

8:Panikkar I-4,5 (no date) 1918 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

ceremony is to be performed and each of them puts on a mask made for the occasion and paints himself in such a way as to look really terrible. The mask of each has a different expression. At about 8 o'clock in the night, the girl (or girls) possessed of the devil is brought in front of the house where are gathered all the people of the village. The whole place is illuminated with big lamps and the girl sits alone, sometimes supported by her mother. Then one by one the masked magicians come before her and execute most frightening dances to the accompaniment of terrifying music. In dancing they make various gestures, possibly with a view to mesmeric effect, and throw various sorts of power, and *rudhilam*, prepared to look very much like blood, is brought into great prominence. Dancer succeeds dancer, each more terrible looking than his predecessor, and the poor girl loses control of herself and falls into a sort of hysteria, in which the devil in her confesses where it came from and who prompted it,[1] etc. In that case the dance is supposed to have been successful and the devil is supposed to have been cast out.

This *Kolam Thullal* is performed on various occasions. The only time I have witnessed it was in 1913, when passing through a village situated in the very heart of the country. The "subject," on that occasion, was a child-mother of fourteen, and the reason for the performance given by her brother, when asked by me, was that the girl had fainted four or five times during the month "without any cause," that they had found out through the astrologer that her husband's relations had been trying to cause trouble by evil magic.

A milder and less expensive form of the same dance is *Velan Thullal*. In this only one man dances with almost the same paraphernalia as the *Kāniyāns* have for *Kolam Thullal*. This variety, however, is generally used only to cure children.

Such performances are only for the ghosts of dead men who have entered into girls or children. But if *Kutti Chattan* tries to do harm, these practices are of no avail. *Kutti Chattan* (sometimes merely *Chattan*, *Kutti* means boy, a term of endearment, *Chattan* is supposed to be a corrupted form of Satan) is in no sense a god. He is something like Puck, very much inclined to mischief. He is supposed to be a dwarf, though he can assume any other form or remain invisible as he chooses. He never goes out of his way to harm anyone, though if anybody injures him once, *Kutti Chattan* never forgives and keeps on troubling him for life. His favourite method of annoying anybody is by throwing stones at the house or dropping unclean things in the food. He may do so without interruption, which would render life almost impossible. He is supposed to have no fingers and, therefore, his vices can be thwarted by people who know it. For example, he cannot pick up things if kept in a place

[1] Note, the "confessions" are without doubt due to subconscious suggestion. The whole scheme of the dance—the music, the masks, the lighting—seems to be arranged with the sole purpose of rendering the "subject" liable to suggestion. More than this, the girl herself believes that she must be possessed of some ghost, and therefore the ground for suggestion is already prepared.

8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

776 high above his reach unless, of course, there is something near by on which he could climb. He cannot untie a knot, as he does not possess fingers, though he can open the strongest lock. What rich people do to keep their money out of his reach is to tie a knot on the purse and keep it locked in a safe, the latter precaution being necessary against human hands that possess fingers.

776 *Kutti Chattan* can, of course, be tamed by magicians and bribed to do whatever
791 his patrons like. There is a story that a Brahmin landlord who was also a magician
773 tamed a *Kutti Chattan* and used him for the purpose of keeping a watch on his things. A Christian tenant of his who had gone to pay the rent, not knowing the existence of the invisible and mysterious detective, stole certain things and took them home with him. But lo! *Kutti Chattan* had followed him, and the man was found dead next morning, and the stolen things were in their place. Such is the power of *Kutti Chattan*, the household elf of Malabar.

771 Whether the practices here narrated and the belief in the existence of a "naughty elf" amount to religion depends very much upon the definition we give to it. Though they are distinctly social and possess social sanction, I do not think it can be called religion, because there is a fundamental difference in the emotional and psychic aspects of religious experience and practice, and such social beliefs and customs as I have described here.

754 But side by side with this there also exists "black magic," sinister, selfish, and
771 anti-social. It is fast disappearing, more as a result of economic pressure than be-
[178] cause of any growing disbelief in it. A young man has no time now to devote him-
[787] self entirely to sacrificing goats and birds all night and chanting formulæ so that he might become possessed of magical power. Those young men who have devoted themselves to such practices are, however, looked upon with great fear. The community does not like such practices, and though these magicians may excite fear, they are also aware of the general belief that they will some day come to a disastrous end.

Their practices are carried on in secret and nobody knows what they do except those initiated. Their assistance is procured only by people who want to do harm to others or satisfy ignoble desires. A man often gets the help of a magician of this sort to perform his "art" so that an enemy of his who is gone on a pilgrimage may not return. They are avoided by all decent people, and society in general, though it fears their "art," considers them charlatans.

754 There are many minor superstitions that can be only briefly noticed here.
784 *The Evil Eye.*—The magical effect of the evil eye is a matter of very serious
123 concern among Nāyar women. I remember being taken to task for telling a woman how healthy her boy looked, and must add that I felt as if I had been convicted of a
[755] heinous crime when four or five days later I was told that the child was ill. The entire feminine opinion of the village was convinced that the child was suffering from my evil eye, and a good many *mantrams*, or magical formulæ, were said over it before the child was well again.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

551 The names of Nayars present great varieties and those most commonly met with are the following:—

(a) Andi Menon
Kandar Menon
Kannan Menon
Ittirayarachan
Korappan
Koman Menon
Kumara Menon
Thenchu Menon
Konthu Nayar
Eacharan Nayar

(b) Raman
Krishnan
Govindan
Gopalan
Achyuthan
Sankaran
Narayanan
Madhavan
Sreedharan
Raghavan
Neelacandhan
Velayudhan

(c) Names of females:
Kunjikavu
Chirutha
Ichon
Kotha
Nangeli
Ooli
Cheeru
Cheeronna
Ichi
Ittiri
Mukami
Oonni Maya

(d) Kalyani
Lakshmi
Madhavi
Rugmani
Seetha
Subhadra
Narayani
Dakshayani
Karthyayani
Meenakshi
Gowri
Bhargavi
Janaki
Parvathi
Sreedevi

(e) Pet names of males:
Appu
Appukuttan
Kuttan
Balan

(f) Pet names of females:
Nani (Narayani)
Mathu (Madhavi)
Kunju (Kunjukutti)
Eacheri (Easwari)
Parukutti.

55 564 The names of males given under (a) are those which appear to be caste names, probably given by the Nambuthiris, who are generally fond of these contracted and disguised appellations. The Nambuthiris say, that the Sudras were so ordained by Manu as not to be called by fair names. They were the landlords and priests, and the Nayars had to do servile work for them. They thought that they ought to keep the Sudras in complete ignorance, and could not endure to hear them talking distinctly in their presence. On one occasion, it is said that when a Sudra servant uttered the words "*Súrya Rasmi* (sun's rays)," his master was so displeased, that he closed his ears, for he could not bear to hear a servile fellow using so elegant a phrase from Sanskrit. On another occasion, when a Brahman overheard a Sudra uttering the words *ahimsa paramo dharma* (the highest of all duties is not to injure anybody), he said to himself, "what a pity it is, that a Sudra should be able to quote a vedic expression!". Their influence in these and other matters began gradually to diminish after the time of the great Malayalam poet, Thunjathu Rámanujan. The names of the caste-men given under (b) are chiefly the various designations of Krishna, Rama and Siva, all of whom are worshipped with equal reverence. Some think that the Nayars are chiefly the worshippers of Vishnu, but the fact that, when at Benares, Rameswaram and other places, they perform the ceremonies of offering of rice-balls in honour of their deceased ancestors, calling their ancestors

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

796 stick, it is possible to produce a kind of musical tone, for [534] which a party is organised to play on it. This entertainment is much admired, and interests the people very much.

(2). *Tiruvâtira* :—This is another important national festival, which falls on the *Tiruvâtira* day in Dhanu (December-[776] January). This concerns the Nayar women, and is said to commemorate the death of *Kâma Déva*, the cupid of Indian mythology, by the burning fire of the third eye of the God [533] Siva. Before day-break the festive day, the young women of the Nayar families hasten to the nearest tank or river for bathing, and during the bath, they amuse themselves with *Tiruvâtira pittu*, songs accompanied by regular splashing of water, supposed to be symbolical of beating of the breast, on account of their grief for Kama's death. At day-break, they return home, and, gaily dressed and adorned, they [526] go to the nearest temple for worship. After a slight breakfast, they proceed to enjoy the *Uzhinjal* (a swinging apparatus made of bamboo and attached to a horizontal branch of a tree). [264] Immense pleasure is taken in this game. The family dinner [262] is at noon, when bananas, sliced and fried in cocoanut-oil, [431] seasoned with salt, are freely distributed among the friends and [263] relatives assembled there. Ripe plantains, and the sweet preparation of arrow-root flour purified and seasoned with jaggery or sugar and cocoanuts, also form one of the chief items of the feast.

[804] (3). *Vishu* :—Next in importance to the two great national [777] festivals just described, comes *Vishu* on the first of Medam (March-April), which is the astronomical new year's day; and a man's prosperity during the year is believed to depend on his seeing some good and lucky thing on the *Vishu* morning. It is the custom to prepare on the night previous, what is known as *Kani*. A bell-metal vessel (*uruli*) is taken, and in it are arranged a *grantha* or cadjan manuscript, a gold ornament, a new washed cloth, some flowers of the *konna* tree (Cassia fistula), some coins in a silver cup, a cocoanut cut into two, a cucumber, some mangoes, and a jack-fruit. On either side of the vessel, are also placed two lamps burning, while there is a plank of wood or some other seat placed in front of it. These are placed in the chief room inside the house, and in the morning, the members of the family, one by one, are taken to the

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

Kani with their eyes shut, and, when they are near it, are directed to open them and look at it. It is taken from house to house for the benefit of the poor. The *kúranavan* of the family gives small presents of money to the children, servants, and tenants. It is also the time honoured custom of the State that on this day the chief officials shall pay their respects to His Highness the Raja at his residence at Tripunattura, and receive presents of varying amounts. In former times, it was customary for all the subjects of the ruling princes to pay their respects to their royal masters with some new year's gifts. This custom has disappeared, and in its place small presents are made by tenants and dependents to their landlords which generally consist of cocoanut, plantains, and other curry-stuffs —intended probably as a contribution to the celebration. The day is marked by a grand feast for the members of the household as well as for the tenants and other dependents. To the Pulayans (the family workmen) are given paddy or rice, oil, etc., on the previous day to enable them to have their own celebrations.

(4). The *Dasara* or *Ayutha Puja*, called also as *Saraswati Puja*, falls in Kanni (September-October) at the autumnal equinox. It is a festival observed in honour of the Goddess *Saraswati*, and every man worships on the last day the implements of his craft and keeps the day a holiday. It is a nine day's festival and is called *Navaratri*.

(5). *Sivaratri*, which falls in Kumbham (February-March), is also an important festival which is observed in common with the members of other higher castes.

Important local festivals.—Of the festivals connected with the temples of the State, the most important is the cock-festival (Bharani) at the Cranganore Kali temple, an account of which is given in my notes on the Valans.[1]

In addition to the *Utsavams* (festivals) held once a year in all important temples in the State, there are other popular festivals such as the *Púrams* at Arattupuzha and Trichur, and the *Kongapada* at Chittur. A short account of the latter is given in the following pages.

The Kongapada festival of Chittur.

The name signifies 'war with Kongan'. The festival falls on the Monday succeeding the Wednesday which immediately follows the new moon in the month of Kumbham (February-March) every year. It will

1. Vide Vol. I, page 238.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

796
184 come off, therefore, either in the latter part of Kumbham or in the former part of the next following month of Meenam according as the new moon in Kumbham occurs earlier or
796 later. The festival is said to be celebrated in commemora-
184 tion of the victory obtained by the local deity, Bhadrakali,
773 widely known by the local designation of Chittur Bhagavati,
776 in a battle fought with the Kongans, the people of what was known in ancient days as the 'Kongu Desam' comprising the localities included in the present British District of Coimbatore, and lying to the north and east of the Chittur Taluk. The final engagement was fought in the eastern out-skirts of the present town of Chittur, and in it the Kongu chief called in the old songs by the simple name of 'Kongan' was slain by the Goddess with her own hand. The place of engagement is now marked by a small extent of rocky surface, on which is cut the figure of the Bhagavati's sword with which Kongan's head was cut off. The rock also shows two holes nearly a foot in depth, and six inches in diameter. These holes are pointed out by old people as having been made by the hoofs of the fore-legs of the Kongan's mount, which is described as a magnificent buff-bull, when the animal jumped on to the rock in the excitement caused by the fall of its master from its back slain by the Goddess. The buff-bull was also slain on the spot. The whole of the Kongu army was completely routed, and all stampeded to their country in utter confusion. In the course of the battle a few men on the side of the Bhagavati were also killed or wounded, among whom were four important persons belonging to four ancient families in Chittur, who appear to have been the leaders of the local militia. The dead bodies of these four and the wounded were taken from the field of battle and carried to the town and handed over to the respective families, the procession being led by the Goddess, who afterwards commanded the people to celebrate the victory every year, and after
173 entering the temple disappeared into her image within. Tra-
796 dition speaks thus of the origin of the war. The wealth of the
184 'Kongu Desom' chiefly consisted of chillies, turmeric, coriander, cumin seed, mustard, areca nut, etc. These commodities
[439] used to be exported for sale, in return for paddy, from Kongu
[492] Desom to Chittur, Palghat, and other places in large quantities

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

173
laden on the backs of mules, asses, bullocks and buffaloes. 796
When once a large caravansary of Kongu laden with such com- 184
modities was passing through Chittur, the people of the four [439]
desams of Chittur, *viz.*, Chittur, Nallepilli, Tattamangalam, [492]
and Pattancheri, robbed the Kongans of all their animals and goods. The chief of Kongu, on receiving the information, naturally felt indignant, and despatched an ultimatum to the *Pramánakkars* of Chittur, demanding the surrender of the animals and the articles, failing which, it was said, he would overrun the four *desams*, destroy the houses, and kill all people even including women and children. On receiving the ultimatum, the people went to the temple of the Goddess, and there read the document before the image of the Goddess. It was so read by a member of the Chittedath house, in whose custody, it is said, the original document, written in a copper plate, is still preserved. The reading of the ultimatum, transcribed in a piece of cadjan, before the Bhagavati, is one of the essential functions performed on the night of the Kongapada festival every year, and it is always done by a member of the Chittedath family, who dresses himself up in the fashion of a Kongan and acts the part of the Kongu chief. When the document [776]
was read and the people prayed to their Goddess in one voice for protection, the Goddess commanded from within the temple that her 'children' need not fear and that when the Kongan took steps to enforce his ultimatum, she would protect them. On receiving no reply to the ultimatum, the Kongan mobilized his men and crossed the Walayar river, the northern boundary of the Chittur Taluk. The information about the crossing of the [314]
boundary was first carried to the Chitturians by the Izhuvans [273]
of the vicinity, who were up the palmyra trees early in the morning for the purpose of tapping for toddy, and they in a body climbed down the trees, and without removing their breast protecting leather straps, tapping knives, mallets and ladders, ran to the four *desams* all in excitement. In view [564]
of the above fact, the advance portion of the day procession of the Kongapada festival is even to this day made up of a number of persons, mostly of the Chetti caste, belonging to the four *desams*, dressed up in the full toddy-tapping kit of the Izhuvans. They do so every year in pursuance of religi- [782]
ous vows made by them for the attainment of particular

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

and dancing. This nightly routine of *pujas*, offerings, dancing, etc., is thus continued for the prescribed number of days.

On the morning following the last day, the votaries purify themselves by a bath and fetch branches of *pala* trees, and a dancing procession is organised, which wends its way through the Nayar streets, accompanied by the Goddess manifested through her *Velichapad*, to the temple of the Goddess, and from there disperse to their respective houses before evening after singing songs of praise and thanks-giving in honour of the Goddess. A pit, 15 feet long, 5 feet broad and 3 feet deep, is then made and filled with ten to fifteen cart-loads of fuel which is burned and reduced to glowing red hot charcoal. Here also is performed a *puja*. At about 4 A. M., the *Velichapad* through whom the Goddess manifests herself, the priests, the votaries, and lastly the caste-men, all walk over the fire several times.

The day dawns and the senior member of the Porayattu family sitting on the stool consecrated to Bhagavati, and covering his head with the silk cloth of the deity, propitiates her with offerings of fruits, cocoanuts, and fowls. The whole ceremony is thus brought to an end. The object of this propitiation is to protect people from the attacks of cholera, small-pox, and other epidemics.

Agricultural ceremonies.

Before closing this part of the subject, it may be noted that the agricultural year begins with the *Vishu* (first of Medam, about the middle of April) at which the hot weather is supposed to terminate. In families where the members pursue agriculture as a profession, they send for the local *Kaniyan* (astrologer), who estimates by astronomical calculations the agricultural prospects and the probable quantity of rain during the ensuing year. He is also asked to choose an auspicious day for ploughing, and on that day the master of the house goes to the seed-store with his Pulayan slaves and takes out a small quantity of each variety of seed, which he puts in a cup made of the leaves of the *kanniram* (nux vomica); he then places the cups in a basket near a lamp in the yard and places a small heap of rice around or near it. A new ploughshare fastened to a plough, and a pair of oxen are also brought, and these are painted with rice water. They are then taken in procession to the field, on reaching which the

[i.e., The Goddess Bhagavati -- Analyst]

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

Pulayan head-man raises a mound of earth on which are thrown a little manure and a handful of seed. He then yokes the cattle to the plough and turns a square plot of ground, taking care to have furrows made in it, and the plough dropped on the right. Ganapati is then propitiated with offerings, and the master throws the seed in the furrow, when the Pulaya head-man invokes the blessings of the gods and the deceased ancestors on the seeds that have been sown broadcast, on the cattle that are let loose, and also on the members of the family, and prays them for a good crop, much sunshine, and a good harvest. A cocoanut is then cut on the ploughshare, and if the hind portion is larger than the front one, it predicts an excellent harvest. If the nut is cut into two equal portions, the harvest will be moderate; if the cut passes through the eyes of the nut or if no water is left in the cut portions, misfortune is foreboded. The portions of the cocoanut are then picked up with the milk inside them and a leaf of the *tulsi* plant (Ocymum sanctum) is dropped into each; if the leaf turns to the right, a prosperous harvest is assured; if to the left, the contrary. The ceremonial concludes with loud shouts and invocations to the gods of husbandry; and the unused seeds are distributed among the workmen.

Nira:—The bringing in of the first fruits (*Nira*) is celebrated at the end of Karkadagam (August), previous to which the doors and windows of the houses are cleansed with the leaves of a tree called *paragam* (Ficus hispida) and decorated with rice flour, while the walls are white-washed, and the yard smeared with cow-dung. On the gates of the houses are placed various kinds of flowers together with their leaves and branches, *viz*:—*athi* (Ficus racemosa), *ithi* (Ficus venosa), *arayil* (Ficus religiosa), *peral* (Ficus Indica), *illi* (young bamboo leaves), *nelli* (Phyllanthus Emblica), *jack* (artocarpus integrifolia), and *mango* (manganefera indica). On the morning of the ceremonial day, the priest of the temple comes out preceded by a Marar blowing a conch-shell, when a bunch of the ears of paddy already placed by the Pulayans outside the outer wall of the temple is taken by him to the temple with the same Marar blowing the conch. Every house-holder then sends out to the fields a man duly purified by a bath and smeared with ashes to gather some rice. As he brings it to

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

the gate of the houses, he is met by a woman with a lighted lamp and some leaves on which is placed the rice. This is carried into the yard in procession, while those assembled cry out, 'Fill, fill, increase, fill the house, fill the basket, fill the stomach of the children'. Three times is it carried on a plantain leaf placed on a wooden plank while the lighted lamp is placed on the right. Ganapati is then propitiated with offerings, and stalks of paddy with ears of grain in them are stuck with cow-dung to the various parts of the house, to the agricultural implements, and even to trees. A sumptuous breakfast brings the ceremony to a close.

Puthari:—The next ceremony is the formal cooking and eating of the new rice (*Puthari*). It sometimes takes place on the *Nira* day, but generally it is an independent festival. An auspicious day is chosen as soon as the first crop is harvested and threshed—a day which must be before the *Onam*. The rice is cooked and eaten with a special curry made of *tagara* (Cassia tora) peas, the fruit of *puthari chunda* (Swertia Cherata), brinjals (Solanum Melongena) and green pumpkin.

Ucharal:—At the end of Makaram (January-February), when the second crop has been harvested, the year's agricultural operations are supposed to be over, and Mother Earth, *Bhumi Dévi*, is considered to rest during the hot weather until the first shower begins. At the beginning of this period the Malayali observes a festival in honour of the Goddess' menstruation, which, like the *Roman Februria*, is supposed to take place at this time. On the last three days during this festival, all granaries are closed, paddy is not sold, and no implement of agriculture is touched, while even the rice to be eaten during these three days is pounded before-hand. On the first day before sunset the granaries are closed, some thorns and shrubs of broom are fixed to the door and cow-dung and ashes are spread in front of it. The next two days are holidays for all; the house must not be swept, nor the floors smeared with cow-dung, and the garden even may not be swept or watered. On the fourth day the granaries are opened, and a basketful of leaves is taken to the field and burnt with a little manure perhaps to indicate that the cultivator remains in possession.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWII Kerala AWII
Nayar

[P 80]

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS

(Continued).

564 77 77c

Religion.

The high caste Nayars profess Hinduism and follow most of the religious practices of the Brahmans whose influence in matters religious as well as social is supreme all over the State. They worship the superior deities of the Hindu pantheon (Siva, Vishnu, and their consorts, as also Ganapati) in *ambalams* or *kshetrams* (temples) of which there are in the State many that have long been in existence. Everywhere in the State, the caste-men and women with their children may be seen going to worship the deities in their local temples both morning and evening after their baths in the public tanks. It is only after this worship that they take their meals, and seldom do they depart from this rule. They also adore the minor deities, namely, Subramanian, Ayyappan, Sástha or Vettakkorumakan, Bhagavati, as well as Kali, the goddess of small-pox, and malignant demons, such as, Kutti-cháttan, Mundian, Gulikan, Gantákaranan. But these deities or demons are located in *kóvus*, mere unpretentious structures with the characteristic tiled roofs and ornamental gables. These deities are represented by carved or uncarved pieces of stone placed on elevated seats beneath the *ál* (Ficus religiosa), the *pala* (Echites scholaris), or the *kinniram* (strychnos), and the priest is usually a non-Vedic Namburi, an Elayad, a Músad, or one of the Sudra castes. The deities such as Subramanian and others above mentioned, are the sons of Siva, and require no animal sacrifices, but the host of demons require to be propitiated with offerings of goats, or fowls, while their wishes are often interpreted by oracles, who are known as *velichapads*.

[264] [3+0] [532] [782]

The Cochin State, as well as Malabar and Travancore, is the land of magic, sorcery, and witchcraft, and as well as

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

belief in animism, and all these are largely mixed up with the religion of the Nayars. Animism refers to the belief that man passes through life surrounded by a ghastly company of powers, elements, and tendencies, impersonal in character, mere shapeless phantoms of which no image can be made and no idea can be formed. Most of these have departments or spheres of influence of their own—one presides over cholera, another over small-pox, yet another over cattle disease, some dwell in rocks, others haunt trees, and others again haunt rivers, whirlpools and waterfalls. All of them require to be diligently propitiated by reason of the ills and calamities which they bring about, and the essence of these practices is magic.

Evidence of a wide-spread belief in the worship of ancestors is to be seen in the kistavens (*thoppi kallús*)—the rock caves containing the sepulchral urns found in the jungles and other parts of the State—in the ceremonies performed and the offerings made for the spirits of the dead. They are worshipped even now in special *kávús*, sometimes even in small out-houses or special rooms in the house on new moon days or *Sankrántis*, and there are also periodical commemorations on the anniversaries of the ancestor's death. Dead ancestors are also represented by stones or small images of gold or silver kept in the middle room of the Nayar houses, and offerings of food and drink are made to them on new moon and *Sankránti* nights. Animistic again is the worship of Káli or Bhagavati who presides over small-pox, cholera, and the thousand maladies that flesh is heir to, the worship of animals and plants and lastly the belief in exorcism and witchcraft in which Brahmans also share.

Serpent worship.

Serpent shrines (*Nágattán kávús* or *Nagakóttas*) are to be found in the compounds of every Nayar house in the Cochin State, and their worship occupies a prominent place in the religious life of the Nayars and other castes. The following mythical origin is ascribed to the adoration of serpents in the Keralólpathi.

The first Aryan colonists settled by Parasurama found Kerala absolutely uninhabitable, and finding it impossible to improve their condition, returned to their old country. After their departure, the Nágas (or serpent gods) of the lower world or *Páthála* took possession of the partly reclaimed land and settled

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

thereon. The early colonists, on a second venture, finding the land occupied, commenced a war against the Nágas, but Parasurama acting as arbitrator, decided in favour of the early colonists, and ordered that they should set apart a corner of every compound as an abode of the serpent gods. He further ordained that these allotted places were to remain virgin-ground, untouched by the blade of the knife or the prong of the fork, while the under-wood and the creepers were to be allowed to grow in wild profusion, and to such the name *kávu* (grove) was given. In it are generally planted several stone idols of serpents placed on a stone-basement called *chitrakúdam*, the whole being held sacred and reserved by a low wall round it to prevent cattle or children straying into that space. The propitiation of serpents is deemed essential to the prosperity and well-being of every house-holder, and periodical offerings are made to them, while the neglect of these is considered to cause leprosy, sterility, or ophthalmia, among the members of the family. These serpents are therefore regarded as tutelary deities of the family, and the gods along with the shrines are conveyed with the property and frequently specified in deeds of transfer.

The high priest of the serpent cult is the Pámbu Mékkát Nambuthiri, who lives in a house full of cobras which are said to be harmless to his family. Whenever an image of a serpent from a grove has to be removed from one place to another, he is sent for on the belief that he alone can do it after due propitiation and offerings, and any tree that is cut down for this removal must be sent to the local temple to be used as fuel. The serpent grove should not be polluted by a member of the low caste, or by a woman during her menses; and when it is so polluted or otherwise spoiled, a member of the family of the Nambuthiri priest has to be informed. He gazes into a vessel filled with oil, points out the evil and suggests the remedy. The ninth asterism in every month is specially selected for snake worship in Nayar families, when offerings of milk and water are made to them. It is said that the approach of a woman during her menses will cause serpents to vacate the grove because of the impurity, and Pulluvans are required to sing songs and perform certain ceremonies to cause them to re-enter the shrines. Images of these serpents are sometimes

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

771
made even of gold or silver and consecrated for worship in 778
Brahman houses. They are also presented to Brahmans by 825
those on whose date of birth an eclipse falls, and this is done [532]
to mitigate the wrath of Ráhu.

Cases of snake bite are of frequent occurrence in the 755
northern parts of the State where snakes abound; and nowhere 759
else is the Hindu treatment so skillfully practised as to effect
a radical cure by medicines and incantations. When informa- [787]
tion regarding snake bite isconveyed to a physician, or a bitten
man is taken to him, the latter can, by the chirping of a lizard
or other tokens, make out the nature of the case and also
whether it is curable or not. It is said that physicians should 755
not go to a patient's house, and the following story is given in 759
explanation :— 773

Once when the emperor Parikshit was ordained to be bitten by the great serpent Takshaka, the latter set out in the disguise of a Brahman. On his way he met another Brahman, who, on enquiry, turned out to be a physician on his way to cure the king. With a view to test his ability, Takshaka bit a tree which was at once reduced to ashes, but the physician removed the poison, and the tree regained its former state. Takshaka, admiring his ability, loaded him with immense wealth and dissuaded him from going to the king. He also made him promise that he should never volunteer his services in such matters unless patients were taken to him. In some [428]
families the profession is hereditary, the most prominent among them beingt be families of Kokkára Nambuthiri and Máliyakal Karta.

In every village are to be found guardian deities that pro- 776 ●
Tutelary deities. tect the villagers from the malevolence of demons which are supposed to occupy an in- [778]
termediate place between gods and men. The temples of the Nayars in which are enshrined these village deities or *Gráma-dévatas* are far less imposing than those of the Brahmans and are callad *kávus*. The deities commonly represented are the consort of Siva or some manifestation of that female divinity, and Ayyappan or Sasta; and these are supposed to keep in subjection the demons and spirits which are ever prone to do harm to the people of the village. Thus, though the demons are objects [782]
of worship, the propitiation of the guardian deities and the festivals held in their honour are considered to be sufficient to curb

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

776 [782] the malignant propensities of those spirits. The most popular of the festivals is the *Mandalam*, which begins on the first of 796 776 Vrischigam (middle of November) and lasts for forty-one days. In addition to the daily *pújas* to the image of Bhagavati by Brahman priests, special rites and ceremonies (*Kúlamezhuthum Páttum*) are also performed by a particular class of Sudras to the figure of the goddess made on the floor by means of 796 791 796 coloured powders, while the devotees sing songs in her praise to the accompaniment of lute-like musical instruments. A [534] man in a fantastic dress with an array of jingling bells round [532] his loins, heavy sounding bell-metal anklets on each foot and a scythe-shaped sword in his hand impersonates the goddess and dances to the sound of tom-toms round the figure of the god- [785] dess Bhadrakáli on the floor. The *Velichapád*, as he is called, [787] becomes highly excited and in his frenzy sometimes even cuts his forehead and causes it to bleed. He speaks, or rather the deity speaks through him, in broken yet commanding tones wholly unlike his own and makes oracular responses to the enquiries addressed to him.

796 On a night in the latter part of the month of Dhanu (early 776 in January), a golden image of the goddess is placed on the back [532] of a big decorated elephant, and, amidst the beating of drums, [788] the firing of pop-guns and crackers, is taken out in procession. [231] The elephant with the goddess is supported on each side by elephants whose numbers vary according to the means of the [791] villagers. The *Velichapád* is indispensable and is accompanied by a group of well-dressed women and girls, each carrying in her hand a plate (*tálam*) full of rice and a light placed on the [782] top of it. The festival ends with a display of fire-works, and the ceremony closes with the sacrifice of goats or fowls. On the same principle but on different lines are celebrated various propitiatory and sacrificial festivals in honour of the other [782] aforesaid deities. Generally, after the harvests, the *Velichapáds* are taken out in procession to the Hindu houses in each village to receive offerings of a measure of paddy and small coins.

776 778 *Sásta* or *Ayyappan*.—According to Keralólpathi, Parasu- rama with the object of protecting the newly created country (Kérala) is said to have established many temples and dedicat- [788] ed them to this deity. The most important of these is at Sabarimala in the Chengannur Taluk of Travancore, which

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

attracts a very large number of pilgrims during the *Mandala pûja* from Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. This deity is peculiar to these parts, where he has the largest number of worshippers.[1]

Demon worship.

The worship of the tutelary deities above described is to a very great extent the outcome of a belief in, and a constant fear of, the influence of demons and evil spirits on mankind, a belief which has existed from a very remote period. The worship of demons is confined to the lower orders and has no connection with the higher forms of Hinduism, and yet this belief in demons is so wide-spread that not even the Brahmans are free from it. In every part of the State, in Malabar and in Travancore, magicians and sorcerers, from the highest Nambuthiri to the lowest Paravan, find employment in exorcising their baneful influences. Among the Pánans, Mannáns and Parayans, magic, sorcery, and witchcraft are a hereditary profession, and among the Nambuthiripáds of Kallúr, Káttumatam, and Chennamangalam are to be found special family deities by whose aid they are supposed to avert the actions of demons and spirits. It is curious to note that there are exorcists even among Christians and Mussalmans; and another interesting fact in connection with this is that the high caste Hindus exercise their magic influence by propitiating, by the aid of their sacred *mantrams*, the more refined and sublime manifestations of God, while the low caste-men propitiate Káli in her more hideous aspects. The ordinary people make a distinction between *Bhûtas* on the one hand, and *Prêtas* and *Pisáchas* on the other. The former are regarded as the messenger of Siva and his consort Sakti, while the latter are the souls of the departed who have died a violent and unnatural death by suicide, murder, or by drowning, and they are believed to be demons who wander about inflicting injury upon mankind in various ways. At noon and at midnight are the chief hours when they attempt to seize or possess those who walk in lonely places or take shelter under tamarind trees or on the sides of tanks. At night the demons are believed to call loudly in order to allure people out of their homes into distant jungles and there to kill them; hence, as a rule, at night a call is not responded to until it is repeated a fourth

1. Vide Religion of the Izhuvans, Vol. I, page 313.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

775 [881] [846] [789] [782] time. At the period of puberty and after child-birth women are especially liable to the attacks of these aërial beings. Charms and incantations, offerings and sacrifices, are the most requisite to counteract the evils that demons do, and iron rings, iron staffs, and leather shoes, are some of the specifics that help to keep the demons at a distance.

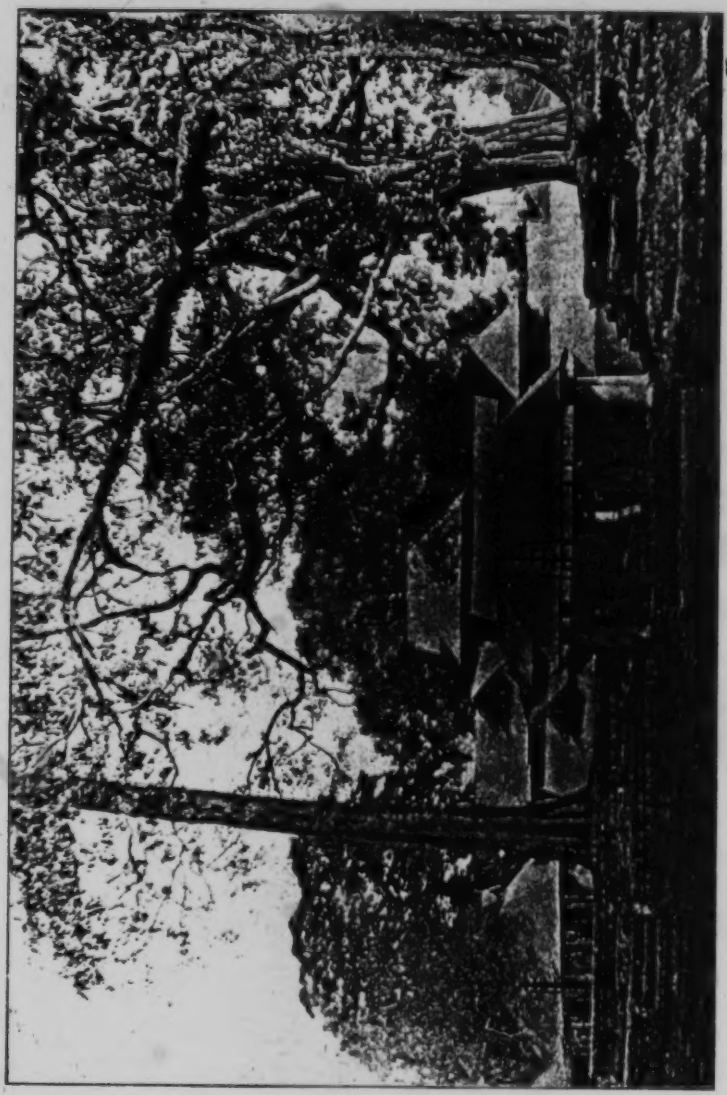
[787] They make their abode chiefly in the palmyra and *pála* trees, but some of them occupy even dwelling houses. Others take the shape of human beings, while yet others possess human beings.

775 782 [776] [791] Their name is legion, and they exist by the offerings of their votaries and their tormented victims. Against the machinations of these demons, the sorcerers and exorcists bring to bear the influence of their special guardian deities who in turn must be propitiated with offerings before they can be called upon to use their beneficial strength. In the case of the evil [783] spirit of him who has died an unnatural death, a Brahman magician purifies the spirit by means of certain ceremonies called *Tilahóma* (an offering of sesamum seeds to *agni* or fire). [789] A Chendus Nambuthiri presides at such ceremonies and transfers the spirit to an image of gold, silver, or wood which is afterwards placed in a Vishnu temple or enshrined in a small building put up for that purpose, there to rest in peace.

771 346 775 [723] [796] In the State, temples are dedicated to various demons, the chief among them being the Avanangáttil Cháttan in Triprayar. The temples dedicated to the small-pox demon correspond to the *Péy Kóvils* or devil temples of the Tamil Districts. In these temples are to be found the instruments and symbols of demon worship, the dancing sticks or wands, the priests' garments, tridents, etc., whilst in others there is nothing save the images of demons. There is also an officiating priest, who is the devil driver and the devil dancer, and [793] [791] who at times even becomes a *Velichapád* inspired to communicate to the votaries, who consult him in times of illness and calamity, the wishes and intentions of that particular demon.

771 225 **Worship of animals and plants.** To a Hindu all organic life is sacred, and his creed is not to injure any living thing, while among the animals worshipped by him the cow occupies the first place. The cow is *Kámadhénu*, the giver of all things, and hence whenever a cow is approached, it is touched

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar



346
776
137

CRANGANORE BHAGAVATHI TEMPLE.

[facing p. 86]

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

with the hand which is, in token of veneration, then raised to the head. Milk, curd, ghee, urine and dung are mixed together and used for purificatory ceremonies; and the images of gods are anointed with this holy mixture called *panchagavyam*. Small doses of it are even taken internally, and it is considered an antidote against poison, besides being prescribed as a *prâyaschit* or expiation for offences against caste, whereas the sprinkling of water mixed with dung removes sin or pollution from all persons, places, or things, and purifies them. The bull, the vehicle of Siva, is also held sacred, and a statue of it in granite is either placed in front of the image of Siva or in a separate shrine, and is worshipped as a God. The lizard associated with Siva, the monkey with Hanumán, the Garuda (the brahmany kite) with Vishnu, and the peacock of Subramania are a few of the other animals of Hindu veneration.

Of the birds of ill omen, one species of owl called *pullu* is much dreaded because of the belief that it causes an illness to children which results in emaciation. At the sound of its screeching, children are taken into a room to avoid its injurious gaze. Various are the propitiatory ceremonies performed by specialists to secure its good-will and to prevent its doing harm to babies; and amulets are worn by children as a preventive against its evil influences. Its hideous screeches are always associated with death.

Among trees, some are worshipped while others are used for *pûjas* or sacrifices. Among the former may be mentioned the pipal (Ficus religiosa), a tree which is held in veneration by the Hindus. Persons afflicted with maladies or whose planets are unfavourable, go round a pipal tree, seven, twelve, forty-one, or one hundred and eight times, muttering prayers and burning camphor and other incense at its foot or perchance engage Brahmans to do so, in the belief, that it will cure disease or counteract evil influences. The *vilva* (Ægle marmelos), whose leaf of triple form is supposed to represent the three eyes of Siva, and symbolise his triple function of production, destruction, and re-production, and the *tulsi* (Ocymum sanctum), which is sacred to Vishnu, are also worshipped. In front of every house, generally on the eastern side, or in the central yard of a quadrangular structure, is a stone or mud altar, on which *tulsi* or the *vilva* is planted and watered every day, and is worshipped by the inmates of the house. From

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

During the exile of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, they lived chiefly by hunting. One day, when Sita was drying some pieces of flesh, a crow accidentally pecked at one of Sita's ruddy toes, taking it for one of the blood red pieces of meat. She thereupon told her husband about it, who shot an arrow at the crow and blinded it in one eye, and thenceforth its descendants have been blind in one eye.

When the great Rama was constructing the dam across the sea, for his large army to cross over to Lanka (Ceylon) to wage war with the *Asura*, Ravana, and to recover his wife Sita, a small squirrel was found working hard without food. This attracted the notice of the great Rama who took pity on him and gently rubbed him on the back with three fingers as a sign of affection, and the impressions thus left became the black and white lines, which the whole species possessed thereafter.

Ari-pṛāvu or the common house-dove has a story told of it. These birds, male and female, are always found in pairs together. Once, it is said, they were quarrelling about a game, and the quarrel ended in the desertion by the male bird of his mate, who recognizing the mistake called for him, and her cries are said to be ever calling out for her mate.

Rain, Thunder and Lightning:—In the aërial regions are huge monsters of extraordinary strength (*Kālameghattanmār*) who are supposed to possess two horns with the aid of which all the water from the earth is drawn up during the summer, to be spat out in the rainy season at Indra's (Rain God's) bidding. Lightning is caused by the friction of the horns, while engaged in the task of spitting out water. Another version of the story as to the origin of lightning is, that it is caused by the brandishing of Indra's sword, while engaged in ordering the monsters to supply the earth with water.

It is said that a new lobe grows on to the liver of a tiger every year it lives, and therefore by an examination of that organ, the age of the animal can be accurately determined.

Evil spirits are believed to have the power at times of changing men into tigers, such being distinguished by having no tails.

The claws and even the teeth of the tiger are used as charms against witchcraft and the evil-eye. They may frequently be seen set in silver, and worn round the necks of

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

539

[789] [825] [757] children. Tiger's whiskers have also the same efficacy against demoniacal influence. The flesh is eaten as medicine, while the skin boiled in gingelly oil and strained into the ear, removes deafness.

539 825 There is a common belief that, should the nest of a brahmany kite be found, and one of the young ones be attached to it by a string, the squall breaks away, generally leaving a portion of the line attached to the nest as it becomes strong. The [789] nest which is formed of sticks should then be thrown into a running stream, when, if any of the sticks that compose it float against the current, they will, on being applied to any fetters, cause them immediately to fly into a thousand fragments.

[171] The owl which is an emblem of wisdom in Europe, and the goose that of stupidity, completely change their respective places in the east, the former becoming a symbol of stupidity, the latter that of wisdom.

[787] The hooting of the owl heard at night, has, in all parts of the world and in all ages, been considered ominous of [763] evil, and is consequently much dreaded. In Cochin, it is generally believed, that the hooting of an owl betokens an impending calamity or even the death of an individual near whose abode its loathsome cry is heard; and so, dwellers in the neighbouring houses at once turn out and drive it away.

824 Jack-o'-lantern:—These are called *Kollykatta Pisáchus* 539 (ghosts which emit fire from their mouths), and make their [776] appearance on the side of tanks, rivers, and marshy places during rainy or foggy nights. They fly away or disappear at the sight of men and are much dreaded by the people.

Preëminent among the trees in the town of Cochin, and towering above all others along the sea-shore and sides of the back-water are the cocoanut palms (cocos nucifera linn), every portion of which, from the leaves to the roots, may be turned to some useful purpose.

[776] There is a tradition that the Raja of Benares, who was a strenuous worshipper of one supreme God, and rejected the custom [643] of making offerings to inferior divinities, became, in course of time, almost equal to the Gods, and created many of the grains now in common use. As his powers increased, so did his ambition, and he meditated creating another species of human beings very superior to anything then existing in the world. But after he had completed its head, the demi-gods became alarmed and

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

has been explained to me as emanating from a command of the Kōlatirri Rājah in days gone by, when, the Arabs having come to the country about Calicut, there was a chance of the women being seized and taken as wives. The explanation is somewhat fanciful. The prohibition to cross the river to the northwards is supposed to have originated in much the same way. As bearing on this point, I may mention that the Nāyar women living to the east of Calicut cannot cross the river backwater, and come into the town." It may be noted in this connection that the Paikāra river on the Nīlgiri hills is sacred to the Todas, and, for fear of mishap from arousing the wrath of the river-god, a pregnant Toda woman will not venture to cross it. No Toda will use the river water for any purpose, and they do not touch it, unless they have to ford it. They then walk through it, and, on reaching the opposite bank, bow their heads. Even when they walk over the Paikāra bridge, they take their hands out of the putkuli (body-cloth) as a mark of respect.

The complexity of the sub-divisions among the Nāyars in North Malabar is made manifest by the following account thereof in the Gazetteer of Malabar. "There are exogamous sub-divisions (perhaps corresponding to original tarwāds) called kulams, and these are grouped to form the sub-castes which are usually endogamous. It is quite impossible to attempt a complete account of the scheme, but to give some idea of its nature one example may be taken, and dealt with in some detail; and for this purpose the portion of Kurumbranād known as Payyanād will serve. This is the country between the Kōttapuzha and Pōrapuzha rivers, and is said to have been given by a Rāja of Kurumbranād to a certain Ambādi Kōvilagam Tamburātti (the stānam or title of the senior lady of the Zāmorin Rāja's family). In

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

bangle there by a messenger. An Akattu Charna Nāyar wore an amulet to keep off the spirit of a Brāhman who died by drowning. Another had a silver ring, on which a piece of a bristle from an elephant's tail was arranged."

Tattooing is said by Mr. Subramani Aiyar not to be favoured by North Travancore Nāyars, and to be only practiced by Nāyar women living to the south of Quilon. Certain accounts trace it to the invasion of Travancore by a Moghul Sirdar in 1680 A.D. In modern times it has become rare. The operation is performed by women of the Odda or Kurava caste before a girl reaches the twelfth year.

Concerning the religious worship of the Nāyars, Mr. Subramani Aiyar writes that "Buchanan notes that the proper deity of the Nāyars is Vishnu, though they wear the mark of Siva on their foreheads. By this is merely meant that they pay equal reverence to both Siva and Vishnu, being Smartas converted to the tenets of Saṅkaracharya. Besides worshipping the higher Hindu deities, the Nāyars also manifest their adoration for several minor ones, such as Mātan, Utayam, Yakshi, Chattan, Chantakarnan, Murti, Maruta, and Arukula. Most of these have granite representations, or at least such emblems as a sword or a cane, and are provided with a local habitation. Besides these, persons who have met with accidental death, and girls who have died before their tāli-tying ceremony, are specially worshipped under the designations of Kazhichchavu and Kannichchavu. Magicians are held in some fear, and talismanic amulets are attached to the waist by members of both sexes. Kuttichattan, the mischievous imp of Malabar, is supposed to cause much misery. Various spirits are worshipped on the Tiruvonam day in the month of Avani (August-September), on the Uchcharam or 28th

day of Makarom (January-February), and on some Tuesdays and Fridays. Kolam-tullal, Velan-pravarti, Ayiramaniyam-tullel, Chavuttu, Tila-homam, and a host of other ceremonies are performed with a view to propitiate spirits, and the assistance of the Kaniyans and Vēlans is largely sought. Serpents, too, whose images are located on the north-western side of most gardens in Central and North Travancore, receive a large share of adoration. The sun is an object of universal worship. Though the Gayatri cannot be studied, or the Sandhyavandanam of the Brāhmans performed, an offering of water to the sun after a bath, to the accompaniment of some hymn, is made by almost every pious Nāyar. The Panchakshara is learnt from an Ilayatu, and repeated daily. A large portion of the time of an old Nāyar is spent in reading the Rāmayana, Bhagavata and Mahābharata, rendered into Malayālam by Tunchattu Ezhuttachhan, the greatest poet of the Malabar coast. Many places in Travancore are pointed out as the scene of memorable incidents in the Rāmayana and Mahābharata. There are many temples, tanks, and mountains connected with Rāma's march to the capital of Rāvana. Equally important are the singular feats said to have been performed by the five Pāndavas during the time of their wanderings in the jungles before the battle of Kurukshetra. Bhima especially has built temples, raised up huge mountains, and performed many other gigantic tasks in the country. There are some village temples owned exclusively by the Nāyars, where all the karakkars (villagers) assemble on special occasions. A very peculiar socio-religious ceremony performed here is the kūttam. This is a village council, held at the beginning of every month for the administration of the communal affairs of the caste, though, at

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

796 526 [184] would seem to be a relic of the days of the Roman pugiles using the cestus in combat. The position taken up by the combatants is much the same as that of the [175] pugiles. The Romans were familiar with Malabar from about 30 B.C. to the decline of their power.* We may safely assume that the 3,000 lbs. of pepper, which Alaric demanded as part of the ransom of Rome when he besieged the city in the fifth century, came from Malabar." Swinging on the uzhinjal, and dancing to the accompaniment of merry songs, are said to be characteristic amusements of the womankind during Ōnam festival, and, on the Patinaram Makam, or sixteenth day after Thiruvonam. This amusement is indulged in by both sexes. It is noted by Mr. Fawcett that "the cloths given as Ōnam presents are yellow, or some part of them [431] is yellow. There must be at least a yellow stripe or a [194] small patch of yellow in a corner, which suggests a relic [198] of sun-worship in a form more pronounced than that which obtains at present. It is a harvest festival, about the time when the first crop of paddy (rice) is harvested."

796 Concerning another important festival in Malabar, the Thiruvathira, Mr. T. K. Gopal Panikkar writes as follows.† "Thiruvathira is one of the three great national occasions of Malabar. It generally comes off in the Malayālam month of Dhanu (December or January) on the day called the Thiruvathira day. It is essentially a festival in which females are almost exclu- [776] sively concerned, and lasts for but a single day. The [773] popular conception of it is that it is in commemoration of the death of Kāmadēvan, the Cupid of our national mythology. As recorded in the old Purānas, Kāmadēvan

* See Thurston. Catalogue of Roman, etc., Coins, Madras Government Museum, 2nd ed., 1894.

† Malabar and its Folk, 1900.

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was destroyed in the burning fire of the third eye of Siva, one of the chief members of our divine Trinity. Hence he is now supposed to have only an ideal or rather spiritual existence, and thus he exerts a powerful influence upon the lower passions of human nature. The memory of this unhappy tragedy is still kept alive among us, particularly the female section, by means of the annual celebration of this important festival. About a week before the day, the festival practically opens. At about four in the morning, every young female of Nair families with pretensions to decency gets out of bed, and takes her bath in a tank. Usually a fairly large number of these young ladies collect at the tank for the purpose. Then all, or almost all of them, plunge in the water, and begin to take part in the singing that is presently to follow. One of them then leads off by means of a peculiar rhythmic song, chiefly pertaining to Cupid. This singing is simultaneously accompanied by a curious sound produced with her hand on the water. The palm of the left hand is closed, and kept immediately underneath the surface of the water. Then the palm of the other is forcibly brought down in a slanting direction, and struck against its surface, so that the water is completely ruffled, and is splashed in all directions, producing a loud deep noise. This process is continuously prolonged, together with the singing. One stanza is now over along with the sound, and then the leader stops awhile for the others to follow in her wake. This being likewise over, she caps her first stanza with another, at the same time beating on the water, and so on until the conclusion of the song. All of them make a long pause, and then begin another. The process goes on until the peep of dawn, when they rub themselves dry, and come home to dress

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

significance. The former typifies the attempt which these maidens make in order to hang themselves on these instruments, and destroy their lives in consequence of the lamented demise of their sexual deity Kāmadēvan. The beating on the water symbolises their beating their chests in expression of their deep-felt sorrow caused by their Cupid's death."

Yet another important festival, Vishu, is thus described by Mr. Gopal Panikkar. "Vishu, like the Ōnam and Thiruvathira festivals, is a remarkable event among us. Its duration is limited to one day. The 1st of Mētam (some day in April) is the unchangeable day, on which it falls. It is practically the astronomical new year's day. This was one of the periods when, in olden days, the subjects of ruling princes or authorities in Malabar, under whom their lots were cast, were expected to bring their new year's offerings to such princes. Failure to comply with the customary and time-consecrated demands was visited with royal displeasure, resulting in manifold varieties of oppression. The British Government, finding this was a great burden, pressing rather heavily upon the people, obtained as far back as 1790 a binding promise from those Native Princes that such exactions of presents from the people should be discontinued thereafter. Consequently the festival is now shorn of much of its ancient sanctity and splendour. But suggestive survivals of the same are still to be found in the presents, which tenants and dependents bring to leading families on the day previous to the Vishu. Being the commencement of a new year, native superstition surrounds it with a peculiar solemn importance. It is believed that a man's whole prosperity in life depends upon the nature, auspicious or otherwise, of the first things that he happens to fix his eyes upon

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

[465] man receives five edangālis of rice from the temple, and a small piece of the flesh of the goat which is sacrificed later. These nine men eat only once a day during the [834] festival; they do no work, remaining quietly at home [841] unless when at the temple; they cannot approach any one of caste lower than their own; they cannot cohabit with women; and they cannot see a woman in menstruation during these days. A crowd of Tiyans join more or less in this, rushing about and barking like dogs, making a hideous noise. They too have kalasams, and, when they are tired of rushing and barking, they drink the arrack in them. These men are always under a vow. [782] In doing what they do, they fulfil their vow for the benefit they have already received from the goddess—796 cure from sickness as a rule. To the west of the 564 temple is a circular pit—it was called the fire-pit, but there was no fire in it—and this pit all the Tiyan women of the neighbourhood circumambulate, passing from west round by north, three times, holding on the head a pewter plate, on which are a little rice, bits of plantain leaves and cocoanut, and a burning wick. As each woman completes her third round, she stands for a moment at the western side, facing east, and throws the [782] contents of the plate into the pit. She then goes to the western gate of the enclosure, and puts down her plate for an instant while she makes profound salaam to the 796 goddess ere going away. Now the procession starts 776 out from the temple, issuing from the northern gate, 788 and for a moment confronts a being so strange that he demands description. Of the many familiar demons of the Malayālis, the two most intimate are Kuttichchāttan and Gulikan, who are supposed to have assisted Kāli (who is scarcely the Kāli of Brāhmanism) in overcoming the Āsura, and on the occasion of this festival these

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

788

demons dance before her. Gulikan is represented by 796
the Vannān and Kuttichchāttan by the Manūtan who 776
have been already mentioned, and who are under like
restrictions with the nine Tiyans. I saw poor Gulikan 796
being made up, the operation occupying five or six 776
hours or more before his appearance. I asked who 536
he was, and was told he was a devil. He looked mild 788
enough, but then his make-up had just begun. He was lying flat on the ground close by the north-east entrance of the enclosure, where presently he was to dance, a man painting his face to make it hideous and frightful. This done, the hair was dressed; large bangles were put on his arms, covering them almost completely from the shoulder to the wrist; and his head and neck were swathed and decorated. A wooden platform arrangement, from which hung a red ornamented skirt, was fastened to his hips. There was fastened to his back an elongated Prince of Wales' feathers arrangement, the top of which reached five feet above his head, and he was made to look like nothing human. Kuttichchāttan was treated in much the same manner. As the procession issues from the northern gate of the temple, where it is joined by the elephants, Gulikan stands in the northern entrance of the enclosure (which he cannot enter), facing it, and a halt is made for three minutes, while Gulikan dances. The poor old man who represented this fearful being, grotesquely terrible in his wonderful metamorphosis, must have been extremely glad when his dance was concluded, for the mere weight and uncomfortable arrangement of his paraphernalia must have been extremely exhausting. It was with difficulty that he could move at all, let alone dance. The procession passes round by east, where, at the entrance of the enclosure, Kuttichchāttan gives his

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no-date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

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dance, round by south to the westward, and, leaving the enclosure, proceeds to a certain banyan tree, under which is a high raised platform built up with earth and stones. Preceding the procession at a distance of fifty yards are the nine men of the Tiyan caste mentioned already, carrying kalasams on their heads, and a crowd of women of the same caste, each one carrying a pewter plate, larger than the plates used when encircling the fire pit, on which are rice, etc., and the burning wick as before. The plate and its contents are on this occasion, as well as before, called talapōli. I could not make out that anything in particular is done at the banyan tree, and the procession soon returns to the temple, the nine men and the Tiyan women following, [782] carrying their kalasams and talapōli. On the way, a number of cocks are given in sacrifice by people under a vow. In the procession are a number of devil-dancers, garlanded with white flowers of the pagoda tree mixed with red, jumping, gesticulating, and shouting, in an avenue of the crowd in front of the elephant bearing the sword. The person under a vow holds the cock towards one of these devil-dancers, who, never ceasing his gyrations and contortions, presently seizes its head, wrings [755] it off, and flings it high in the air. The vows which are fulfilled by this rude decapitation of cocks have been made in order to bring about cure for some ailment. The procession passes through the temple yard from west to east, and proceeds half a mile to a banyan tree, under which, like the other, there is a high raised platform. When passing by the temple, the Tiyan women empty the contents of their plates in the fire pit as before, and the nine men hand over the arrack in their kalasams to the temple servants. Let me note here the curious distribution of the rice which is heaped in the fire pit.

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

opprobrium at her house. The chief of the fisherman caste, styled Kūli Muttatta Arayan, has the privilege of being the first to begin the work of polluting the Bhoot or shrine. Into other particulars it is unnecessary to enter. Cocks are slaughtered and sacrificed. The worshipper gets flowers only, and no holy water after paying his vows. Instead of water, he proceeds outside and drinks arrack or toddy, which an attendant Nāyar serves out. All castes are free to go, including Tiyars and low caste people. The temple was originally only a Bhoot or holy tree with a platform. The image in the temple is said to have been introduced only of recent years.' It is a pity Mr. Logan is so reticent. My information is that the headman of the Mukkuvans opens the festival by solemnly making a fæcal deposit on the image. Here again there is the same strange union of everything that is filthy, abusive, foul and irreverent, with every mode of expressing the deepest religious feeling."

Of the cock festival at Cranganore, the following account is given by Mr. T. K. Gopal Panikkar* in his interesting little book on Malabar and its folk. "In the midst of its native charms is situated a temple dedicated to Kali, the goddess who presides over the infectious diseases, cholera and small-pox. She is a virgin goddess, whom no quantity of blood will satisfy. The temple is an old-fashioned one, presenting no striking architectural peculiarities. The priestly classes attached to it are not, as usual, Brāhmins, but a peculiar sect called Adigals, of whom there are but three families in the whole of Malabar. The Brāhmins are purposely excluded from participation in the poojah ceremonies,

* Malabar and its Folk, Madras, 1900.

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lest their extreme sanctity might increase the powers of the goddess to a dangerous extent. Poojahs are daily offered to her. An annual festival known as the Bharani, connected with this goddess, plays a most important part in the religious history of Malabar. It comes off in the Malayalam month of Meenam (about March or April). Pilgrimages undertaken to the temple on this occasion are potent enough to safeguard the pilgrims, and their friends and relations, from the perilous attacks of cholera and small-pox. Hence people resort thither annually by thousands from almost all parts of Malabar; and, the more north you go, the stronger will you find the hold which the goddess has upon the popular imagination. The chief propitiatory offering on the occasion is the sacrifice of cocks. In fact, every family makes a point of undertaking this sacred mission. People arrange to start on it at an auspicious moment, on a fixed day in small isolated bodies. Preparations are made for the journey. Rice, salt, chillies, curry-stuffs, betel leaves and nuts, a little turmeric powder and pepper, and, above all, a number of cocks form an almost complete paraphernalia of the pilgrimage. These are all gathered and preserved in separate bundles inside a large bag. When the appointed hour comes, they throw this bag on their shoulders, conceal their money in their girdles, and, with a native-fashioned umbrella in the one hand and a walking-stick in the other, they start, each from his own house, to meet the brother pilgrims at the rendezvous. Here a foreman is selected practically by common consent. Then commences the vociferous recitation of that series of obscene songs and ballads, which characterises the pilgrimage all along. The foreman it is that opens the ball. He is caught up by others

788 796 782 trunk, and another pulls out its neck by the head, and, in the twinkling of an eye, by the intervention of a sharpened knife, the head is severed from the trunk. The blood then gushes forth in forceful and continuous jets, and is poured on a piece of granite specially reserved. Then another is similarly slaughtered, and then as many as each of the pilgrims can bring. In no length of time, the whole of the temple yard is converted into one horrible expanse of blood, rendering it too slippery to be safely walked over. The piteous cries and death throes of the poor devoted creatures greatly intensify the horror of the scene. The stench emanating from the blood mixing with the nauseating smell of arrack renders the occasion 796 all the more revolting. One other higher and more 788 acceptable kind of offering requires more than a passing 755 mention. When a man is taken ill of any infectious 782 disease, his relations generally pray to this goddess for his recovery, solemnly covenanting to perform what goes by the name of a thulabharum ceremony. This consists in placing the patient in one of the scale-pans of a huge balance, and weighing him against gold, or more generally pepper (and sometimes other substances as well), deposited in the other scale-pan. Then this weight of the substance is offered to the goddess. This is to be performed right in front of the goddess in 788 the temple yard. The usual offerings being over, the 796 homeward journey of the pilgrims is begun. Though the festival is called Bharani, yet all the pilgrims must vacate the temple on the day previous to the Bharani 796 day. For, from that day onwards, the temple doors are all shut up, and, for the next seven days, the whole place is given over to the worst depredations of the countless demons over whom this blood-thirsty goddess holds sway. No human beings can safely remain there, lest

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

they might become a prey to these ravenous demons. In short, the Bharani day inaugurates a reign of terror in the locality, lasting for these seven days. Afterwards, all the dirt is removed. The temple is cleansed and sanctified, and again left open to public worship. The pilgrims return, but not in the same manner in which they repaired thither. During the backward journey, no obscene songs or expressions are indulged in. They are to come back quietly and calmly, without any kind of demonstrations. They get back to their respective homes, and distribute the sandals and other pujah substances to their relations and friends who have elected to remain at home; and the year's pilgrimage is brought to a close."

"The month Karkkatakam," Mr. Fawcett writes, "when the Malayālis say the body is cool, is the time when, according to custom, the Nāyar youths practice physical exercises. At Payōli in North Malabar, when I was there in 1895, the local instructor of athletics was a Paravan, a mason by caste. As he had the adjunct Kurup to his name, it took some time to discover the fact. Teachers of his ilk are invariably of the Paravan caste, and, when they are believed to be properly accomplished, they are given the honorific Kurup. So carefully are things regulated that no other person was permitted to teach athletics within the amsham (a local area, a small county), and his womenfolk had privileges, they only being the midwives who could attend on the Nāyar women of the amsham. His fee for a course of exercises for the month was ten rupees. He, and some of his pupils, gave an exhibition of their quality. Besides bodily contortions and somersaults, practiced in a long low-roofed shed having a sandy floor, there is play with the following instruments :—watta ; cheruvadi,